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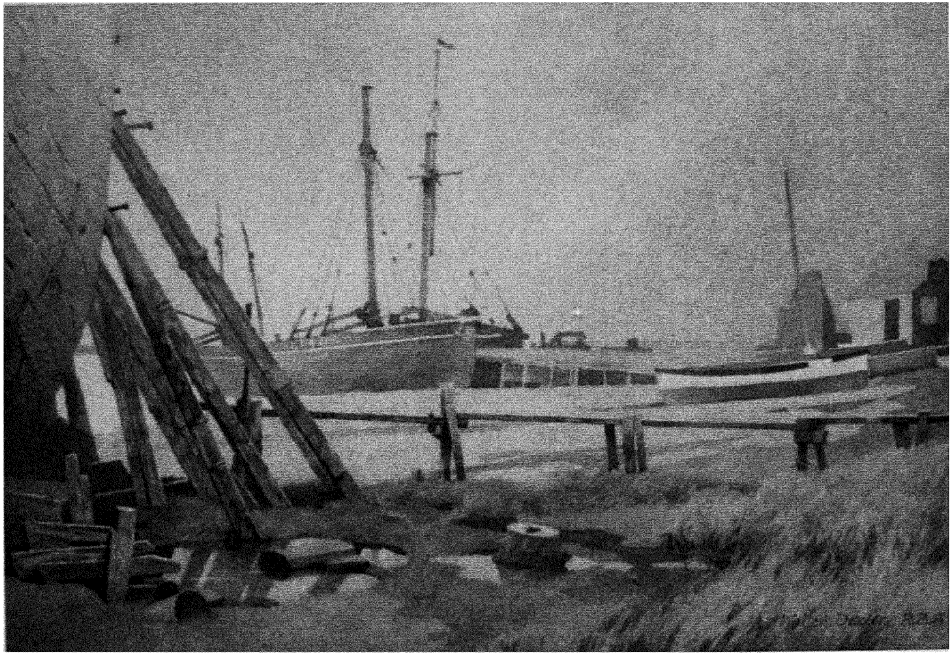
BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE NORFOLK BROADS

WILD LIFE IN EAST ANGLIA

A LITTLE GUIDE TO NORFOLK

A LITTLE GUIDE TO SUFFOLK



SLAUGHDEN

WHERE THE POET CRABBE WORKED AS A QUAY LABOURER

SOME LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS OF EAST ANGLIA

BY

WILLIAM A. DUTT

AUTHOR OF "WILD LIFE IN EAST ANGLIA," ETC.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY
WALTER DEXTER, R.B.A.
AND SIXTEEN OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO GIPSY

"Marna with the trees' life
In her veins a-stir!
Marna of the aspen heart
Where the sudden quivers start!
Quick-responsive, subtle, wild!
Artless as an artless child,
Spite of all her reach of art!
Oh, to roam with her!

. . . .

"Marna of the far quest
After the divine!
Striving ever for some goal
Past the blunder-god's control!
Dreaming of potential years
When no day shall dawn in fears!
That's the Marna of my soul,
Wander-bride of mine!"

that he can find no immediate justification for adopting such a course; for although he may be satisfied that a goodly number of the more or less famous persons he intends to present to his readers were true East Anglians, wise men and women of the East, he cannot ignore the fact that Norfolk and Suffolk owe some of their most interesting literary associations to celebrities to whom other counties have the first claim because they happen to have been born there; while yet other notable folk, though born in one or another of our two eastern-most counties, can hardly be considered genuine East Anglians, seeing that their parents, and perhaps their ancestors for several generations, were more closely connected with other parts of the country. That so many of them should have shown so marked a partiality for East Anglia may perhaps be taken as evidence of their appreciation of the exceptional merit of its inhabitants; but as to affirm this would be to support Mr. Ellis's statement in respect to the bias of local patriotism I will not do so.

Another very good reason why I should not enter upon the subject of this book with more than this brief reference to the native ability of East Anglia is that in the following chapters no pretence is made to deal with anything like all the famous men and women of letters who have been associated with Eastern England—to attempt to do so would be to essay the impossible. Indeed, it is very doubtful whether the book will have a single reader who will not be disappointed by the omission of some writer who in that reader's opinion—probably a very just one—ought not to have been neglected. But to do anything like justice to the

literary associations of East Anglia is a task for some one whose intellectual equipment is up to the high standard of East Anglian merit, and whose acquaintance with the literature of the district and the lives of its literary celebrities, whether native or not, is far wider and more intimate than my own. All I can claim to have done is to have gathered together a number of facts, anecdotes, and incidents, together with certain opinions and impressions of East Anglia; to have connected them as nearly as possible with the places they in a greater or lesser degree belong to; and to have tried to give some sort of form to a rather rambling subject by dealing with it in certain topographical divisions into which it seems naturally to distribute itself. Through the adoption of this arrangement the book may prove to be of some use as a guide to the literary associations of Norfolk and Suffolk. My excuse for having made a considerable number of quotations from various sources is, that it seems to me very much better that in a book of this kind the men and women introduced should speak for themselves wherever possible, than that the author should attempt to express their opinions and feelings for them.

At the end of the book a list is given of the works which have been consulted during the writing of it. I must, however, express my special indebtedness to Mr. W. Aldis Wright and Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for their kind permission to quote from the "Letters of Edward FitzGerald;" to Mr. Thomas Wright for a like kindness in respect of his "Life of Edward FitzGerald;" and to Mrs. Barham Johnson and Messrs. Methuen & Co. for allowing me to quote from "William Bodham Donne and

his Friends." Messrs. Macmillan have also been kind enough to let me use certain anecdotes appearing in the late Dr. Gordon Hake's "Memoirs of Eighty Years."

For assistance in securing some of the photographs that are reproduced I am indebted to Miss Metcalfe (Beccles), the Rev. G. A. Crossle (Broome Rectory), Mr. F. J. S. Rippingall (Langham), Mr. J. Loder (Woodbridge), Mr. H. Birkbeck (Eaton), Mr. Bertram Hall (Blundeston), and Mr. T. H. Warren (East Dereham).

W. A. D.

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SOME LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS OF EAST ANGLIA

CHAPTER I

THE HOMES AND HAUNTS OF EDWARD FITZGERALD

Woodbridge to Bredfield—Bredfield House—FitzGerald's boyhood—Boulge Cottage—"The Wits of Woodbridge"—Rev. George Crabbe—James Spedding and Frederick Tennyson—Edward Byles Cowell—"Salámán and Absál"—Boulge Church—FitzGerald's Grave—Bredfield churchyard—Farlingay Hall—The "Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám"—Carlyle at Farlingay—His description of FitzGerald.

IT is "roses, roses all the way" on the morning in April when I start from Woodbridge on a pilgrimage to some of the homes and haunts of Edward FitzGerald; but they are not the roses of which Omar and Hafiz sang—they are primroses, peering between the budding brambles arching the roadside ditches, nestling close to the hawthorn roots, and mingling with the cowslips in the meadows and along the grassy road borders. On such a morning, FitzGerald, in one of his happier moods, would have sung—

"The spring is alive
And the meadows are green!"

and, breaking "the old pipe in twain," he would have been—

> "Away to the meadows,
> The meadows again!"

For before the frost-white blossoms have faded on the blackthorns, there are swallows skimming between the roadside oaks and over the springing grass, the fresh green of wild parsley leaves has clothed the banks, purple ground-ivy and golden stars of lesser celandine are brightening the ditchsides, and here and there the sun-warmed air is fragrant with sweetbriar when it enters a copse and comes out laden with the sweetness of violets. In every roadside garden there is a thrush singing or a bullfinch busy among the fruit-buds, yellow-hammers in pairs fly in and out of the hedges, titmice frolic amid the slender branches of elm and black poplar, and occasionally a chaffinch sings his brief, rapid song or more frequently calls *pink, pink*, from tree-top or greening thorn-bush. All the way from Woodbridge to Bredfield the country is alive with singing birds, and at intervals the call of a cuckoo makes perfect the gladsomeness of a bright spring day.

The parish of Bredfield adjoins Woodbridge on the north, and it is not more than half an hour's walk from the town to Bredfield House, formerly Bredfield White House, in which Edward FitzGerald was born, and in which his father John Purcell (who took his wife's surname of FitzGerald when her father died) lived for several years. The house, which stands well back from the road on the left, is an imposing Jacobean building, painted white and fronted with Dutch gables;

between it and the road stretches a park which in spring is spangled with cowslips and in which are a few old trees and well-grown firs. It stands well, on fairly high ground which slopes away in front into a small valley widening into that of the river Deben; so it well may be that even during his boyhood Edward FitzGerald came under the spell of that beautiful drowsy valley which all his life had such a fascination for him, and the charms of which more than one poet has sung. This morning a blue haze fills the valley, but not so dense that the sunlight cannot penetrate it, lighting up the fresh green of its bordering woodlands and flashing upon its tidal waters; undoubtedly it was this pleasant outlook determined in the builder's mind the site of the house in those long-gone days when James I. was king. FitzGerald, notwithstanding that he feared more than he loved his beautiful but haughty and imperious mother, and would hide among the shrubs in front of the house when he saw her large yellow coach and four black horses coming up the drive, always had pleasant recollections of his Bredfield home; and when he was an old man one of his latest rambles out of Woodbridge was towards the White House, where he wandered through the grounds and peered into the windows of that room which was called the "Magistrates' Room," because it was there he used to be whipped. But it was characteristic of him that he would not be persuaded to re-enter the house after all those with whom he had lived there were dead, and the place had for him sorrowful as well as pleasant associations. The former were bound to be uppermost in a mind always more or less tinged with melancholy

and impressed with the saddening knowledge that "the Leaves of Life keep falling one by one."

But it was during what was, perhaps, the happiest period of his life—when he occupied the little thatched cottage at Boulge—that a ramble towards Bredfield was most delightful to him, and the sight of his old home suggested to him the writing of his "Bredfield Hall," in which he dwelt so lovingly on the charms of the old house and on its past glories, beginning with—

"Lo, an English mansion founded
In the elder James's reign,
Quaint and stately, and surrounded
With a pastoral domain.

"With well-timber'd lawn and gardens
And with many a pleasant mead,
Skirted by the lofty coverts
Where the hare and pheasant feed.

"Flank'd it is with goodly stables,
Shelter'd by coeval trees;
So it lifts its honest gables
Towards the distant German seas;

"Where it once discern'd the smoke
Of old sea-battles far away:
Saw victorious Nelson's topmasts
Anchoring in Hollesley Bay."

And he went on to picture the scenes the fine old house had witnessed since it first reared its "chimneys high" and "gilded vanes" above the Deben valley: the knight in ruff and doublet, the cavaliers, the "languid beauties limn'd by Lely," the full-wigged Justice, and the freely-tippling Tory squires.



BREDFIELD HOUSE

"Here they lived and here they greeted,
Maids and matrons, sons and sires,
Wandering in its walks, or seated
Round its hospitable fires.

"Oft their silken dresses floated
Gleaming through the pleasure ground:
Oft dash'd by the scarlet-coated
Hunter, horse, and dappled hound."

But in the near or far future he saw the day when the scene of all these glories must meet with the inevitable fate of man and all his handiwork—

"And though each succeeding master,
Grumbling at the cost to pay,
Did with coat of paint and plaster
Hide the wrinkles of decay;

"Yet the secret worm ne'er ceases,
Nor the mouse behind the wall;
Heart of oak will come to pieces,
And farewell to Bredfield Hall!"

In one of his letters to Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, FitzGerald thanks him for sending him a picture of "dear old Bredfield," adding—

"Some of the tall ash trees about it used to be visible at sea; but I think their topmost branches are decayed now. . . . From the road before the lawn, people used plainly to see the topmasts of the men-of-war lying in Hollesley Bay during the war. I like the idea of the old English house holding up its inquiring chimneys and weathercocks (there is great physiognomy in weathercocks) towards the far-off sea, and the ships upon it. How well I remember when we used all to be in the Nursery, and from the windows see the hounds

come across the lawn, my father and Mr. Jenney in their hunting-caps, etc., with their long whips—all Daguerreotyped into the mind's eye now—and that is all."

Later on, to the same correspondent, he wrote to ask about the health of his friend Mr. Jenney, who had become the owner of Bredfield House since the FitzGeralds had left it. "Seeing him cross the stiles between Hasketon and Bredfield, and riding with his hounds over the lawn, is among the scenes in that novel, called 'The Past' which dwell most in my memory."

While the FitzGeralds lived at Bredfield, Edward was sent to school, first at Woodbridge and then at Bury St. Edmunds; but when he was sixteen years old they removed to Wherstead, near Ipswich, where they made their home for about ten years. Then they returned to the neighbourhood of Woodbridge and occupied Boulge Hall, a house dating from the reign of Queen Anne, and which had beside one of its park gates a quaint little one-storied thatched cottage, originally built for an elderly lady who had lived at the Hall, but was frequently on bad terms with her husband. Of this snug cottage Edward FitzGerald eventually took possession; but that was not until after he had taken his degree at Cambridge and numbered among his intimate friends Thackeray, John Allen, Frank Edgeworth, the brother of the authoress, James Spedding, and others, who had even thus early learned to love him and for whom he had so deep a regard that, as he afterwards said, his friendships were more like loves. To reach Boulge from the White House one passes through a part of the village of Bredfield, and a ramble of a little more than a mile brings one to the

bounds of the park, where a byroad on the left leads to the famous white-walled thatched cottage which was the scene of so many meetings of FitzGerald with the "wits of Woodbridge," and of which he can never have had any but the pleasantest of memories, notwithstanding that he looked upon Boulge as one of the ugliest and dullest places in England.

It was in the spring of 1837, just when the primroses and cowslips were in full bloom, that he took up his residence in the cottage, making the little room on the right of the entrance his study, and filling it with his books, a bust of Shakespeare, a piano, music, pipes, and walking-sticks. Here he began and continued for some years to live what he called a very pleasant Robinson Crusoe sort of life. To attend to his needs there were John Faiers and his wife, the former an old Waterloo veteran who worked on the Boulge estate, the latter "a snuffy but vain old woman, with very red arms, who wore, besides other vanities, an enormous bonnet full of flowers." For constant companions he had a cat, a dog, and his parrot, Beauty Bob; but fortunately he was never, while occupying his Boulge retreat, in lack of good and congenial friends. Chief among these was the Rev. George Crabbe, who was at that time vicar of Bredfield, and who was the author of a Life of his father the poet, which is one of the most delightful of British biographies. Upon him FitzGerald soon bestowed the name of "the Radiator," on account of the gleams of wit and wisdom he so freely emitted; and he is described by Mr. Thomas Wright as having been

"a strong muscular man of the Parson-Adams type, with a prominent Wellington nose. Like FitzGerald,

he was careless of personal appearance, his clothes did not fit, his hat was never in the right place. As he could not be trusted with money (for when out he invariably gave away all he had to the needy or the plausible), his daughters used to take the precaution of emptying his pockets before he quitted the house. He was loved by all the parish, and he loved all and prayed for all, 'including Mary Anne Cuthbert,' the only black sheep in his flock. . . . He had a passion for botany and fine trees, and once pleased FitzGerald hugely by saying of a landowner who had felled some oaks that he had 'scandalously misused the Globe.'"

Frequent visits to Geldeston, where his sister, Mrs. Kerrich, lived, helped FitzGerald to pass away the years during which he made the cottage his home, and occasionally he wandered further afield, to London, Bedford, Brighton, and elsewhere; but the days he spent here were very pleasant ones, and he seems to have shared in such social pleasures as Boulge and Bredfield afforded with far more zest than he ever showed for such things in after years. Frequently he helped Caroline Crabbe, the daughter of the vicar, to teach the children in the Bredfield village school, while on Sundays he rendered similar service to Lucy Barton, his future wife, in the Sunday school. One day he occupied himself with concocting two gallons of tar water, to be tried, first on the vain old Mrs. Faiers, and if she survived, on himself; but this was something quite out of the ordinary, and calculated to upset the accustomed routine of his days. As a rule he spent his mornings in reading "the same old books over and over again," the afternoons in rambling along the country roads and field footpaths, accompanied by his dog, and in the evening

he would sit by an open window of the cottage, inhaling the fragrance of the roses which climbed beside it, and listening to the thrushes as they "rustled bedwards in the garden." There were nights, however, when good company assembled in this little cottage. Bernard Barton would stroll over from Woodbridge, and Crabbe from Bredfield vicarage. Occasionally they would be joined by the Rev. — Churchyard, of Woodbridge, or by the Rev. Robert (afterwards Archdeacon) Groome, of Monk Soham, and everything would be, as was afterwards said, "most hospitable, but not comfortable." Spedding and Frederick Tennyson also visited him here, and when the latter once complained of the dulness of FitzGerald's letters, he replied that the original fault lay in his having chosen such a dull place as Boulge to live in. But he added, "I really do like to sit in this doleful place with a good fire, a cat and dog on the rug, and an old woman in the kitchen." And when the "wits of Woodbridge" could not join him in the evenings, and he found the place *too* dull, he would stroll across the park to the Hall Farm to have a chat with his farmer friend, Job Smith, or he would light a lantern and find his way through the fields to Bredfield vicarage, and spend an hour or two with Crabbe in that dingy little study he called the "Cobblery," and which reeked of tobacco and smelt like an inn-parlour. To one of his correspondents he wrote that he had entered upon "a decidedly agricultural course of conduct." He "walked about the field where the people were at work," with the result that "the more dirt accumulates on my shoes, the more I think I know."

In the year 1846, while he was still at Boulge, he

made the acquaintance of Edward Byles Cowell, who afterwards became Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge, and but for whom he would never have thought of translating the "Rubáiyát" of Omar Khayyám. Cowell, who was born and educated at Ipswich, where he had for schoolfellows Charles Keene, the *Punch* artist, and George William Kitchin, afterwards Dean of Winchester, married Elizabeth Charlesworth,[1] whose father, the Rev. John Charlesworth, lived at Bramford, near Ipswich, in a prettily situated little house which the Cowells afterwards inhabited, and where FitzGerald became a frequent guest. He seems to have also been an admirer of Elizabeth Charlesworth, for when Cowell announced that he had become engaged to her, he replied: "The deuce you are! Why, you have taken my lady!" But this was no bar to his frequent visits to Bramford, where he and Cowell read Greek plays and Greek history together, and he began to learn Spanish and Persian. Of the days he spent there in the little house with the japonica trained over its front and the "monkey-puzzle" tree conspicuous in the garden, FitzGerald, whom Cowell wrote of about this time as "a kind of slumbering giant or silent Vesuvius," had none save pleasant memories, and it is hardly surprising that he was strongly opposed to Cowell's leaving Bramford for Oxford, and afterwards for India, where he went as Professor of History and Political Economy in the Presidency College, Calcutta. It was just before the Cowells sailed from England that FitzGerald brought out his translation of Jámí's "Salámán and Absál," in

[1] A sister of Maria Charlesworth, who wrote several popular children's books, and who died in 1880.

an introductory letter to which, addressed to Cowell, he wrote—

"Ah! happy Days! When shall we three meet again—when dip in that unreturning Tide of Time and Circumstance! . . . In those meadows far from the world, it seemed, as Salámán's Island . . . before an Iron Railway broke the Heart of the Happy Valley whose Gossip was the Mill-wheel, and Visitors the Summer Airs that momentarily ruffled the sleepy stream that turned it as they chased one another over to lose themselves in Whispers in the Copse beyond."

From the Boulge cottage it is a walk of only a few minutes across the park, or along the road that skirts it, to the parish church, which stands in the park, well shaded by trees, and with a well-established rookery near it, where to-day the birds are cawing incessantly and busy nest-building. The churchyard is one to which many men have been irresistibly drawn since that June day of 1883, when Edward FitzGerald was laid to rest in the shadow of its grey church tower; but this morning, when in the bright sunlight everything rejoices in the glad awakening of spring, I approach it with lingering feet: the few steps that have to be taken between the cottage and the graveyard seem to bring about a too-sudden transition from life to death. In the cottage one feels so conscious of the presence of FitzGerald that it is not easy to believe he has left it for ever; before standing by his grave one would like to trace him through other scenes with which he is associated, and so come to the last scene of all prepared to appreciate its full solemnity. For in his life there was much that happened in a quiet way between the day when he left

the cottage and that on which he was brought back to Boulge for the last time; so to come to his graveside before having followed him to where the best work of his life was done, seems like interrupting the natural sequence of his life and anticipating its end.

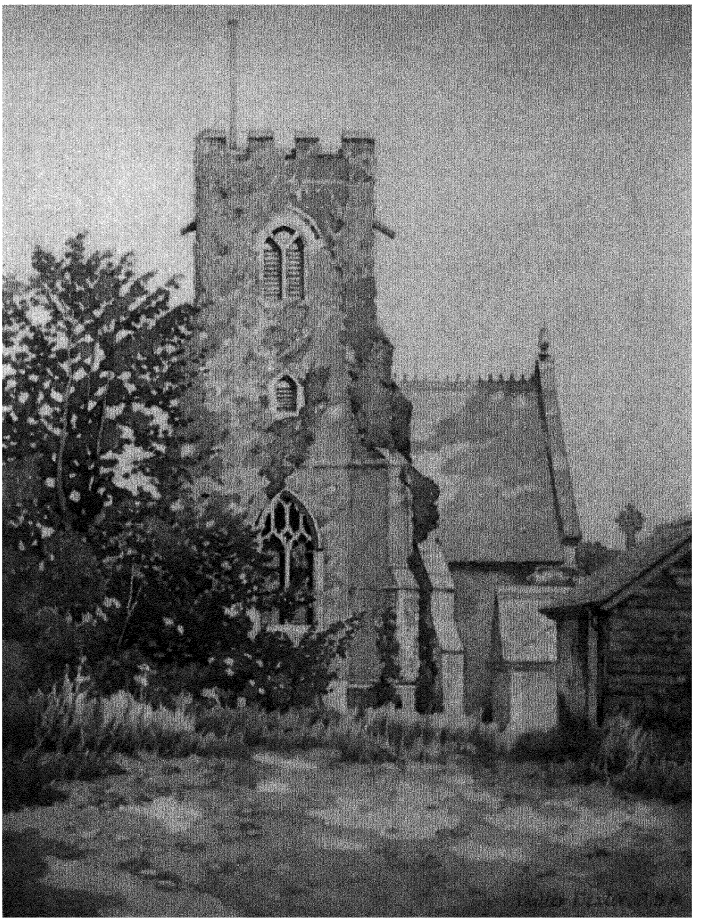
It was like FitzGerald to have no desire to be buried in the grim and ugly mausoleum of his family. Could his own wishes have been carried out, he would have been cremated; but as this was impossible, owing to the Woking crematorium not having been opened for public use at the time of his death, there was dug for him just an ordinary grave—it is not even a brick one, the old sexton assures me, as I stand beside it—and over it was placed a granite slab carved with a cross-fleury and the simple inscription—

"EDWARD FITZGERALD,

"Born 31st March, 1809. Died 14th June, 1883.

'It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.'"

In the church, over the FitzGeralds' manorial pew, there are elaborate marble memorials inscribed with letters of gold; but he, upon whose simple grave fall the pink petals of the rose bush raised from the seeds of that which sheds its fragrance around the Persian poet's tomb at Naishapur, has his name written in abiding letters in the hearts of men. Eccentric, whimsical, and retiring as he was, he had the knack of making true men love him; and now that he has "crept silently to rest," thousands who never knew him reckon their mental likeness of him among the things they hold most dear. Probably, no other man who was so shy



BOULGE CHURCH

IN THE CHURCHYARD OF WHICH EDWARD FITZGERALD IS BURIED

of meeting men, ever won so much affection or unconsciously insured for himself a so lasting fame.

A small iron plate beneath the rose tree is inscribed :

> "This Rose Tree Raised in Kew Gardens from Seed Brought by William Simpson Artist-Traveller from the Grave of Omar Khayyám at Naishapur was Planted by a few Admirers of Edward FitzGerald in the name of the Omar Khayyám Club. 7th October, 1893."

It was a happy inspiration and a pleasing tribute to him who sang—

> " Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say ;
> Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday ; "

but the best tribute of all is that of those silent ones who from time to time, coming from places far and near, bow their heads above the dust of one they never knew, but whose words have stirred their hearts and finely expressed their "dark philosophy." They are not so many as those who make pilgrimages to the tombs of some great men ; but they pay fitting, if silent, homage to the dead ; and as they stand by the graveside, they repeat the lesson he has taught them—

> " So when that Angel of the darker Drink
> At last shall find you by the river-brink,
> And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
> Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.
>
> " Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
> And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
> Were't not a Shame—were't not a Shame for him
> In this clay carcase to abide?

"'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest."

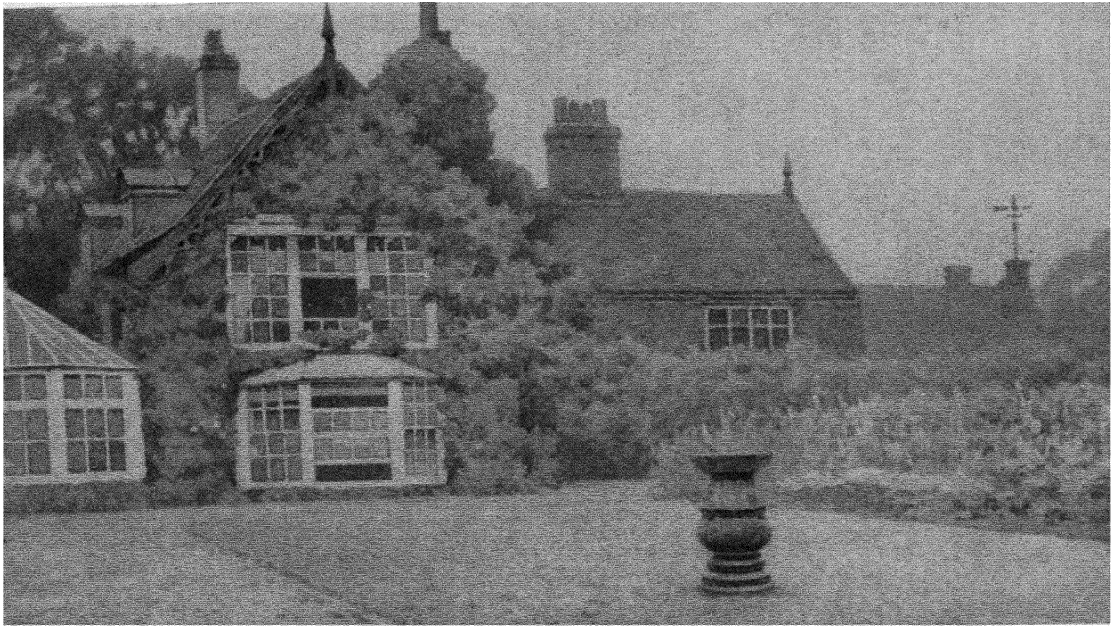
There is little in the church at Boulge to make one pause there: it was restored by FitzGerald's brother John, and fungi no longer grow about the communion table. Nor on the Hall Farm hard by is there anything to remind one of that old-fashioned low thatched building, "provided with all the things in Bloomfield's poems," in the cosy chimney corner of which FitzGerald, smoking a long clay pipe, would sit in the evening with Job Smith, his farmer friend, until Job's wife broadly hinted that it was time for him to go home. Such pleasant evenings came to an end when the farmhouse was burnt to the ground; but something like them was enjoyed a little later, when Job Smith removed to Farlingay Hall, a farmhouse about half a mile out of Woodbridge, and FitzGerald went to lodge with him.

In returning from Boulge to Bredfield, I follow the footpath along which FitzGerald, lantern in hand, used to trudge at night to see his friend Crabbe, and just before crossing a tiny brook which widens into a small pool beneath some black poplars, I get a glimpse, on the left, of Bredfield High House, an ancient farmhouse with moulded brick chimneys. Then, after skirting a field with high hedges on which the blackthorn blossom is still gleaming against the blue of the sky, the footpath ends in Bredfield churchyard, in which Crabbe is buried, and not far from which is the vicarage he built. The church, which seems to have been originally an Early English structure, but like that of Boulge was restored

and modernized by John FitzGerald, is chiefly remarkable for its beautiful old carved and coloured roof and a good brass, dated 1611, to Leonard Farrington and his wife, who are represented with their six sons and two daughters. A plain stone marks the grave of Crabbe; but in the chancel is a tablet erected to his memory by the inhabitants of the parish as "a token of gratitude for the many benefits and acts of kindness conferred upon them during his residence of twenty-two years as vicar." He died in September, 1857, in his seventy-third year, and FitzGerald, who attended his funeral, tells us that it was at his own desire he was buried "among the poor in the churchyard," and in a grave only distinguished "by a common Head and Footstone." His death was a sad blow to the friend with whom he had passed so many hours in smoking and arguing in the Boulge cottage, and who found it "melancholy enough" to enter the dark little "Cobblery" at the vicarage and take away with him the remains of the last cheroot Crabbe had tried to smoke, and a little silver nutmeg-grater which had belonged to the poet Crabbe.

After passing Bredfield House again, I abandon the direct road to Woodbridge near a little cottage which was once a toll-house, and, taking the road to the right and its first branch road to the left, soon reach that fine old farmhouse Farlingay Hall, to which FitzGerald removed in 1853, and where he made his headquarters for about seven years, whilst he lived a somewhat roving life in paying frequent visits to some of his friends. It was at Farlingay he began, at the instigation of Cowell, to study Persian, and to translate "Salámán and Absál,"

which was published anonymously in 1856 by Parker and Son, and printed by Childs of Bungay. Here, too, much of the "Rubáiyát" was rendered into the immortal quatrains; but before the spell of the Persian poet, to whose temperament his own was so much akin, had been cast upon him, he was visited at Farlingay by Carlyle, whose coming, while eagerly anticipated by FitzGerald, seems to have caused him some disquietude in fearing his guest would not be comfortable. The visit was paid in August, 1855, and before Carlyle left Chelsea, he received from his anxious friend most careful instructions as to how he could make an easy journey; while to Mrs. Carlyle, FitzGerald sent a message begging her to let him know what Carlyle was to eat, drink, and avoid. He promised that he should have entire liberty to stay as long or go as soon as he pleased, and that during his visit he should be left mainly to his own devices: he suggested, too, that he should bring some books. So Carlyle duly arrived with his books, and seems to have been quite content with the arrangements made for his comfort and entertainment. He spent some time with Crabbe and his daughter, accompanied FitzGerald on excursions to Dunwich, Aldeburgh, and the grand old castle at Framlingham, took several pleasant rambles in the neighbourhood of Woodbridge, and between them spent hours under an elm near the Farlingay house, reading Voltaire and other writers in preparation for his "Life of Frederick II." He arrived on August 8th and stayed until the 18th, refusing to return by rail, "like a great codfish in a hamper," and preferring the Ipswich steamer. Writing to FitzGerald a few days after his return, he complained that he had



FARLINGAY HALL

WHERE FITZGERALD ENTERTAINED CARLYLE

been unable to get any sleep since he came out of Suffolk: "The stillness of Farlingay," he said, "is unattainable in Chelsea;" but for all that he felt "privately confident" that he had got good by his Suffolk visit. He promised that, if he lived, he would come again when FitzGerald had got his own house in order, and suggested that in that house there should be a "chamber in the wall" for himself, "*plus* a pony that can trot, and a cow that gives good milk." "With these outfits," he added, "we shall make a pretty rustication now and then, not wholly *Latrappish*, but only *half*, on much easier terms than here." Carlyle subsequently wrote of FitzGerald as being "a lonely, shy, kind-hearted man, who discharged the sacred rites (of hospitality) with a kind of Irish zeal or piety."

CHAPTER II

THE HOMES AND HAUNTS OF EDWARD FITZGERALD (*continued*)

FitzGerald removes to Woodbridge—The room over the gunsmith's—Scandal the "main staple" of Woodbridge—"Old Gooseberry"—Little Grange—Charles Keene—The Fairy Godmother—Tennyson at Woodbridge—John Grout—The "dear old Deben"—FitzGerald's last letter—His last journey—Bernard Barton—Quakers' graveyard—Charles Lamb's advice to Barton—Barton and the ship *Bernard Barton.*

TOWARDS the end of 1860, FitzGerald removed from Farlingay to Woodbridge, into the house[1] of Sharman Berry, a gun-maker living on the Market Hill near the quaint old Flemish-looking shire hall. For some time the country had had less charm for him, owing to the cutting down of old trees and levelling of the old wild-flower banks by the "petty race of squires" who only used "the earth as an investment;" and so he had been gradually drawing nearer to Woodbridge, and had more than once talked of settling down in this, or some other small town, for the rest of his life. Still, as his biographer remarks, it does seem rather strange that a man of taste and culture "with an income of something like a thousand a year" should have chosen to live for thirteen years in a little room over the gunsmith's shop, where there was so little space for his pictures and

[1] The house is now occupied by Mr. Nunn, a house decorator.

knick-knacks that it "looked like a back shop in Wardour Street." But apparently he was quite content with his cramped quarters, and when he felt lonely he would sometimes invite one or two of the local "Merchants" to "eat oysters and drink Burton ale" with him, or ferry across the Deben to have a chat with Alfred Smith, a son of his old farmer friend, who had settled down on a farm at Sutton Hoo. But much of his time was now spent in sailing on the Deben or taking short sea cruises in his small schooner yacht, the *Scandal,* which was named "after the main staple of Woodbridge," and captained by Thomas Newson, of Felixstowe, a smart seaman, who always carried his head on one side, reminding FitzGerald of "a magpie looking into a quart pot." Frequently, too, he paid brief visits to Lowestoft and Aldeburgh, where he collected sea lore from the fishermen, some of which he sent to Alfred Tennyson, at the same time telling Mrs. Tennyson to "send the old wretch here, where nobody scarce knows his name (don't be angry, Mrs. A. T.)." He also interested himself in the "manuring and skrimmaging" of the local volunteers, to whom he presented a challenge cup, and on one occasion prevailed upon his brother John to give a grand field day in the park at Boulge. But at the end of 1872 his landlord, Berry, became engaged to marry a widow, and FitzGerald, who objected to the advent of the widow into the Market Hill house, rashly remarked that "old Berry would now have to be called 'Old Gooseberry.'" This injudicious witticism being repeated to the widow, its perpetrator was summarily ejected from his lodgings, though the meek Berry was much averse to parting

with him. But the widow was determined, and when Berry ascended to FitzGerald's room to announce her decision, she remained at the foot of the stairs calling out "Be firm, Berry! Remind him of what he called you." For some months FitzGerald occupied rooms in the house next door; but in 1875 he went to live in Little Grange, a house he had purchased and altered more or less to his liking.

To reach Little Grange one follows the main road running through the town in a northerly direction until suburban Melton is almost reached, when a by-road branches off on the left, leading to Bredfield and Dallinghoo. On turning down this by-road, the last home of Edward FitzGerald is almost at once seen on the left—an enlarged old farmhouse with the main entrance opening on to a sort of terrace, beyond which is a small meadow or paddock with a few shrubs and trees. When FitzGerald bought it, it was called the Grange Farm—a name he continued to use for a while, but afterwards altered to that by which it is known to-day. But although he had enlarged it considerably before he removed into it, he was content with occupying the largest room downstairs, which he had divided into two by folding doors, using one part as a study and the other as a bedroom. From the study a French casement opened on to a garden walk, leading to a dilapidated summer-house, in which he sometimes sat with a friend and offered him snuff from Bernard Barton's snuffbox. The garden walk he called the "Quarter-deck," and it was along this walk that Charles Keene, the *Punch* artist, whose acquaintance he had made at Dunwich, marched at times playing the bag-pipes,

or lounged, smoking a short clay pipe or sucking a succulent sweet known as a "brandy-ball," to the local variety of which he was so partial that FitzGerald had to send parcels of it to him in London. In his small garden, FitzGerald took a great interest; for he had a passion for flowers, especially those with bright colours. His favourite was the nasturtium; but, as he said, he "rather worshipped" an oleander there was in the garden; and the crocuses, daffodils, and sweet peas were a delight to him year after year. His Oriental love of bright hues also led him to insist on old Mrs. Howe, his housekeeper, dressing herself in scarlet, when he called her the "Fairy Godmother." Her husband, John, who had been a sailor, was re-christened "Old Puddle-dog" on account of his frequent blunders in executing commissions. One of his duties was to attend to a stove in the hall; and it was not long before this stove became known as "Howe's guitar," because of the din he usually made in raking out the ashes. When he was more noisy than usual, FitzGerald would burst out singing—

"Gaily old Puddle-dog
Banged his guitar."

FitzGerald's own musical instrument was an organ, on which, on summer evenings, he would play for hours together, sometimes, as Mr. Thomas Wright tells us, "forgetting himself and others, and disappearing gradually in the gathering gloom, till at last nothing was visible but the white of his spreading hair and the dim outline of his shape, including the pendulous shawl," which he generally wore abroad and often when at home.

In September, 1876, the "old wretch," Alfred Tennyson, and his son at last accepted FitzGerald's frequent invitations to come and see him. They arrived unexpectedly, and, on inquiring for the house of Edward FitzGerald, were promptly directed to that of a (locally) better known worthy of that name, who was a superintendent of the Suffolk Police. But the superintendent soon conducted them to Little Grange, and it was with great delight that the two old friends met again after a lapse of nearly twenty years. They sat up late reviving old memories, and it was like "Old Fitz" not to hesitate about telling Tennyson that he had better not have written anything after 1842, when he ceased to be a poet and became an artist. But Tennyson loved his old friend far too well to be offended by his plain speaking, no matter how much truth there might be in what he said; and he was much more hurt while at Woodbridge by reading in a newspaper that he (Tennyson) had refused to allow Longfellow to quote from his poems. This report much annoyed him, and he at once sat down in FitzGerald's study and wrote to Longfellow, Hallam Tennyson hurrying off with the letter just in time to catch the post. "So my house," wrote FitzGerald to Cowell a few days later, "is so far become a Palace, being the Place of a Despatch from one Poet to the other, all over the Atlantic!" But he did not consider the "palace" a fit place for the entertainment of his friend, for whom he had accommodation provided at the old Bull Inn on Market Hill, then kept by a local celebrity named John Grout. Before Tennyson retired to the inn for the night, however, FitzGerald amused him with some bits of local gossip; then, feeling that

he had been indiscreet, gravely warned his companion not to "let this go to the Bull!" One day during the poet's visit they had a trip down the Orwell in the Ipswich steamer; and altogether their meeting seems to have given them much pleasure. At any rate, Tennyson always had most agreeable recollections of his visit to Little Grange, and even of his host's attempts to convert him to vegetarianism; and years after he recalled them when he wrote in the dedication to his *Tiresias* volume—

"Old Fitz, who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And while your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers;
Who live on milk and meal and grass;"

and, after a playful reference to a ten weeks' trial of FitzGerald's "table of Pythagoras," he continued—

"But none can say
That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought,
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well;
A planet equal to the sun
Which cast it, that large infidel
Your Omar."

A few days after Tennyson's departure from Woodbridge, FitzGerald and Archdeacon Groome happened

to meet old John Grout, the landlord of the Bull, to whom FitzGerald remarked that Woodbridge "should feel itself honoured" in having been paid a visit by Tennyson. Old John, not understanding this, asked Mr. Groome "who that gentleman was Mr. FitzGerald had been talking of." "Mr. Tennyson, the poet laureate," was the reply. "Dessay," said Old John; "anyhow, he didn't fare to know much about hosses when I showed him over my stables!"

From the time of Tennyson's visit until the end of his life, FitzGerald passed most of his days at Little Grange very quietly, contenting himself with his books, his organ, his garden, and his pigeons. Occasionally he took a trip on the river, and more frequently paid visits to Aldeburgh, Lowestoft, or Merton, where George Crabbe, the son of his old Bredfield friend, was now rector. To those with whom he frequently corresponded he added Charles Eliot Norton, Professor of the History of Fine Art in Havard University; Mr. W. Aldis Wright, who was to be his literary executor; J. Russell Lowell; and one or two others; but as the years passed he took less and less pains to make new acquaintances. Writing of his life at this time his biographer says—

"It was a frequent custom with Edward FitzGerald to walk about the lanes and roads near his house at midnight. When all the world was at rest and silent he would emerge from his 'château,' his green and black plaid shawl round him and trailing on the ground, like some old Roman senator in toga, and mount Mill Hill (then with scarce a house on it) behind Little Grange. Here he would stalk backwards and forwards, brooding over his troubles . . . or pondering the tremendous problems of life, death, and eternity—among the great

inky shapes of the windmills and their slowly revolving sails, dear to him if only for Don Quixote's sake, no sound reaching him save an occasional creak or the hoarse voice of a raven from some distant and indistinct chimney."

In May, 1883, having business in London, he took the opportunity to see the Carlyle statue on the Chelsea Embankment and Carlyle's old house in Cheyne Row, "now all neglected, unswept, ungarnished, uninhabited," and "To Let;" but he was glad to hurry back the same evening to his own "dull home." In the same month he was seen seated on a bench beside the Deben, where he called to him a little boy who was playing in the ooze, and told him of the fate of the Master of Ravenswood. Probably this was the last time he ever sat on the bank of his "dear old Deben," which, when far away from it, he had often pictured to himself, "with the worthy collier sloop going forth into the wide world as the sun sinks." On June 12th he sat down to write to his friend Laurence, the painter, the last letter he ever wrote, in which he said—

"If I do not write, it is because I have absolutely nothing to tell you that you have not known for the last twenty years. Here I live still, reading, and being read to, part of my time; walking abroad three or four times a day, or night, in spite of wakening a Bronchitis, which has lodged like the household 'Brownie' within; pottering about my garden (as I have just been doing), and snipping off dead Roses like Miss Tox; and now and then a visit to the neighbouring Seaside, and a splash to Sea in one of the Boats. I never see a new Picture, nor hear a note of Music, except when I drum out some old Tune on an Organ, which might almost be carried about

the Streets with a handle to turn, and a Monkey on the top of it. So I go on living a life far too comfortable as compared with that of better and wiser men: but ever expecting a reverse in health such as my seventy-five years are subject to. . . . To-morrow I am going (for my one annual Visit) to G. Crabbe's, where I am to meet his Sisters, and talk over the old Bredfield days. Two of my eight nieces are now with me here in my house, for a two months' visit, I suppose and hope. And I think this is all I have to tell you of."

After leaving Little Grange next day for Merton he never saw it again. He travelled to Merton by way of Bury, where, while waiting for a train, he strolled into the town to have a look at his old school. He arrived at Merton tired but cheerful, and, after sauntering for a while in the garden, went early to bed. Next morning, when the servant went to call him, he was found to have died quietly in the night. It was just as he had wished the end to come; for some years before, when his doctor had told him his heart was affected, he had said he was glad of it, as his end was likely to come suddenly, and there would be "no old women messing about him." His body was brought back to Little Grange, whence it was removed to Boulge for burial.

Twilight is beginning when I turn away from Little Grange and retrace my steps along the quiet streets towards the Market Hill; but there is daylight enough left for finding the narrow entrance to Turn Lane and the little graveyard of the Friends Chapel, where lies Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, who was perhaps the chief of FitzGerald's Woodbridge friends. His grave is not hard to find; for the headstones in that dingy

enclosure, though all alike and similarly inscribed, are very few, and time as yet has done nothing towards obliterating the simple inscription—

"BERNARD BARTON,
died
19 of 2 mo. 1849.
Aged 65."

Barton, whom no one now remembers save as the friend of FitzGerald and Charles Lamb, is described by the former's biographer as having been a good-natured man with some bit of mock-modesty about him; "his poems were known in every Suffolk homestead, and good little maidens by the Deben liked to see a copy lying in their chair beside their prayer-book before going to sleep." He was not a native of Woodbridge, but was educated at a Quaker school at Ipswich, and came here early in life and started business as a coal and corn merchant. His wife died in giving birth to his daughter Lucy, and his loss drove him for a while from the town; on returning, he secured in Alexander's Bank an employment he continued until two days before his death. At one time, it is true, the reception given to some of his simple descriptive, meditative, and devotional verses, temporarily impressed him with the idea of its being safe for him to abandon bank-work and rely on versifying to provide him with means of existence; but he was wise enough to take the advice of those who knew better than he did how weak a staff he proposed to rely on. Byron wrote to him: "Do not renounce writing, but never trust entirely to authorship. If you have a profession, retain it; it will be, like Prior's fellowship, a last and sure

resource." Charles Lamb, whose letters to Barton are among the most delightful he wrote, gave him equally good advice in his own inimitable way:

"Throw yourself on the world, without any rational plan of support beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you! Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers." "Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you," he wrote again. ". . . O the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts that disturb the brain of the unlucky wight, who must draw upon it for daily sustenance! Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment; look upon them as lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome, dead timber of a desk, that makes me live!"

On another occasion, when Barton complained of his health being affected by late hours and a sedentary life, Southey sensibly advised him to keep good hours and never to write verses after supper; while Lamb, on hearing that he suffered much from headache, wrote:

"You are too apprehensive about your complaint. . . . Believe the general sense of the mercantile world, which holds that desks are not deadly. It is the mind, good B. B., and not the limbs, that faints by long sitting. Think of the patience of tailors—think how long the Lord Chancellor sits—think of the brooding hen."

So Barton settled his mind to the monotony of money-changing, and devoted his spare time to the production of harmless little books of verses.

"The preparation of a book," wrote FitzGerald, in a preface to a posthumous edition of Barton's works, "was amusement and excitement to one who had little enough of it in the ordinary course of daily life: treaties with publishers—arrangements of printing—correspondence with friends on the subject—and when the little volume was at last afloat, watching it for a while somewhat as a boy watches a paper boat committed to the sea."

Bernard Barton was fortunate in having among his correspondents two such letter-writers as Lamb and FitzGerald. He himself was a great letter-writer—in a way; and a good many of his letters have lately been printed in Mrs. C. B. Johnson's "William Bodham Donne and his Friends." A fair specimen of how he wrote when in a playful mood is the following, written to Donne:

"I am going to be made a great Man! Not exactly called to the Peerage, but I am not sure the announcement of such an elevation being in prospect could have been more unlooked for. Four of my Townsfolk or Neighbours, for two of 'em live out of Woodbridge, are building a new Ship, and she is to be launched from the Stocks here this month or next under the name of *The Bernard Barton of Woodbridge*. . . . 'Think of that, Master Ford!' If my Bardship never gets me on the Muster-roll of Parnassus, it will into the Shipping List! If I fail of being chronicled among the Poets of Great Britain by some future Cibber, I shall at any rate be registered at Lloyds, along with the *Spitfires*, *Amazons*, *Corsairs*, and what not. The astounding fact was made known to me by one of the four owners a fortnight ago, and I have scarce recovered it yet. I communicated it, too abruptly, to poor Edward FitzGerald, just as he was going to sit down to dinner with me, and he jumped up,

chair and all, taking that and himself into the far corner of the room, professing that he could not presume to sit at the same table with one about to have a ship named after him. I wish I may bear such unlooked-for honour with becoming meekness; if I do, I must thank my Quakerism for it, for it would ill befit one of our cloth to be uplifted in spirit by such an event."

CHAPTER III

WITH CRABBE AT ALDEBURGH

A sea-wasted shore—Mr. Swinburne at Dunwich—Aldeburgh—The boyhood of Crabbe—His parents—School days—Slaughden Quay—Its sailors and smugglers—The surgeon's apprentice—Sarah Elmy—The quay again—Crabbe sails for London—Returns to Aldeburgh—Dr. Crabbe—His visits to Beccles—London again—Mr. Dudley North—The Rev. George Crabbe—Curate at Aldeburgh—An uncomfortable situation—A ducal chaplaincy—An alarm at Aldeburgh—"The Borough" a "magnified" Aldeburgh—FitzGerald's admiration of Crabbe—FitzGerald at Aldeburgh—Professor Fawcett.

SOME geologists tell us that East Anglia, at least on its eastern side, is a sunken land; and we need only turn to the pages of its historians to satisfy ourselves that much of what was once East Anglia now lies beneath the sea. There was a time when Easton Ness, near Southwold, was the easternmost point of England; but it is so no longer. When the Romans colonized this country they built at Walton, near Felixstowe, a camp which probably rivalled that of Burgh Castle in size and strength; but to-day there remains no trace of it, and over its site the waves roll incessantly shorewards, to break at the foot of cliffs the Romans never knew. All along the coast the shore folk tell of the sea's siege and the towns and villages the sea has won; so that about the coast there clings a sad kind of romance—that of a wasted land where history seems likely to repeat itself in sad stories for

shore folk yet unborn. More than anywhere else around our sea-girdled land, we feel the spell of this romance at Dunwich, once the chief town and port on the East Anglian coast, now a shrinking hamlet, whose eventful past already seems a part of old mythology. Standing on the Dunwich cliffs to-day, one needs a poet's imagination to conjure up a picture of the strong-walled town that stretched far out into the sea; and the greatest of our living poets, after dwelling for a while amid its ruins, has come to our aid—

"Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,
Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm,
Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,
Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,
Built of holy hands for holy pity,
Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

"Church and hospice wrought in faultless fashion,
Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,
Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,
Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,
Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion
Hailed a God more merciful than Time.

* * * * *

"Low and loud and long, a voice for ever,
Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.
Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,
Dust from dust as years relapse along;
Graves where men made sure to rest, and never
Lie dismantled by the seasons' wrong.

* * * * *

"Rows on rows and line by line they crumble,
They that thought for all time through to be.
Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble
Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.
Earth, and man, and all their Gods wax humble
Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea."

One of the smaller coast towns that have had their days of disaster when the swollen tides swept their streets and quays is Aldeburgh, where to-day, notwithstanding the enterprise which has made the town a popular little watering-place, one can still see traces of the ravage wrought in bygone days by the sea. Now, it chiefly consists of two streets running almost parallel with the shore; formerly there were three streets, but one by one, and sometimes half a dozen together, the houses of the easternmost were washed away. "As if by a miracle," as one writer has said, the quaint old sixteenth-century Moot Hall has been spared; but even now the sole protection of the town against incursions of the sea is the shingle ridge which stretches along the shore, and the ruined houses of Aldeburgh's hamlet of Slaughden prove that this sole barrier is at times overcome. The town itself has suffered little of late years, and its hopeful inhabitants feel confident of its safety from encroachment of the sea; but while it retains and boasts of its old Moot Hall, it has to lament the loss of a building to which greater interest would attach in its having been the birth-place of the poet Crabbe. This quaint old house—a typical specimen of a beachman's dwelling in the old beach company and smuggling days—was one of eleven the sea swept away in 1779, when George Crabbe was about twenty-five years old. It was first occupied by the poet's grandfather, who was a burgess of the town and, in his latter days, its collector of customs; and it is described by the poet's son as having had chambers projecting far over the ground floor, and small windows, with diamond panes, almost impervious to the light. There are still in circulation

some prints published by Bernard Barton as representing the house in which Crabbe was born, and an engraving of this print, by Stanfield, forms the vignette to his Life; but the house there shown was one occupied by the Crabbes during a part of the poet's boyhood.

But although Crabbe's earliest home has disappeared, and Aldeburgh itself is so altered that he would scarcely recognise it, its old hamlet of Slaughden is very like what it was in his day, the oozy shores of the Alde have still those characteristics which at once attracted and repelled him, and around the ancient borough the sterile heaths and stagnant marshlands preserve unaltered those features he has so truthfully and vividly described. Apart from the changes the seasons bring, they have known no change, except that one by one the old houses, net-stores, and ramshackle wooden warehouses of Slaughden have been washed away or have fallen into decay.

Crabbe's son and biographer, in describing Aldeburgh as it was during his father's boyhood, says that it was a "poor and wretched" place, with nothing of the elegance (!) and gaiety which now characterize it during its "season." The parallel streets on the low ground were then bordered by "mean and scrambling" houses, the abodes of pilots and fishermen.

"Vessels of all sorts, from the heavy troll-boat to the yawl and prame, drawn up along the shore—fishermen preparing their tackle, or sorting their spoil—and nearer the gloomy old town hall (the only indication of municipal dignity) a few groups of mariners, chiefly pilots, taking their quick short walk backwards and forwards, every eye watchful of a signal from the offing

—such was the squalid scene that first opened on the author of 'The Village.' Nor was the landscape in the vicinity of a more engaging aspect—open commons and sterile farms, the soil poor and sandy, the herbage bare and rushy, the trees 'few and far between,' and withered and stunted by the bleak breezes of the sea."

The following oft-quoted lines describe as faithfully to-day as they ever did, much of the country lying inland of Aldeburgh—

"Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye;
There thistles spread their prickly arms afar
And to the ragged infant threaten war;
There poppies, nodding, mock the hope of toil;
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,
The slimy mallow waves her sickly leaf;
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade."

In almost everything Crabbe wrote the influence of his early surroundings can be traced; even his own home-life provided him with some of his saddest scenes of domestic distress.

"He was cradled among the rough sons of the ocean," says his son, "a daily witness of unbridled passions, and of manners remote from the sameness and artificial smoothness of polished society. At home . . . he was subject to the caprices of a stern and imperious, though not unkindly nature; and, probably, few whom he could familiarly approach but had passed through

some of those dark domestic tragedies in which his future strength was to be exhibited. The common people of Aldeburgh in those days are described as—

> 'a wild, amphibious race,
> With sullen woe display'd in every face;
> Who far from civil arts and social fly,
> And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye.'

Nor, although the family in which he was born happened to be somewhat above the mass in point of situation, was the remove so great as to be marked with any considerable difference in point of refinement. Masculine and robust frames, rude manners, stormy passions, laborious days, and occasionally boisterous nights of merriment,—among such accompaniments was born and reared the Poet of the Poor."

Crabbe's father, during several years of his life, seems to have been glad to turn his hand and abilities to anything that would provide him with a bare living. At one time he was the keeper of a parish school conducted in the porch of the church at Orford, a decayed little coast town a few miles south of Aldeburgh. Subsequently he became the village schoolmaster at Norton, in Norfolk, where he also officiated as parish clerk. Then he returned to his native town, Aldeburgh, where, after working for many years as warehouse-keeper and deputy collector of customs, he was finally appointed collector of the salt dues. Soon after his return he married a widow of the name of Loddock, whom her grandson says was "a woman of the most amiable disposition, mild, patient, affectionate, and deeply religious in her turn of mind." George was the eldest of six children, five of whom lived to mature years. The other, a girl, died in infancy; and it was

chiefly owing to the death of this child, to whom he was much devoted, that the father, always a man of violent passions, became so soured, gloomy, and savage that certain scenes of his home life haunted the poet's memory all his days. Until then, notwithstanding his excitable nature and lack of self-control, he was a fairly considerate husband and father. Although mainly interested in the seafaring business of the town, and occasionally helping in the management of a fishing-boat of which he was part owner, he was not without knowledge of literature and a liking for reading. In the evening he would read aloud to his family extracts from the works of Milton or Young. Unconsciously, too, he was responsible for his eldest son's first attempts at versifying. He took in regularly "Martin's Philosophical Magazine," at the end of which was a sheet of original, and generally very bad, poetry. These sheets the salt-master invariably cut out before sending the magazine to be bound, and they became the property of George, who tried to imitate some of the verses.

The salt-master soon recognized in his eldest son talents above the average of those of lads of his rank in life; but when his temper had the mastery of him he sometimes expressed contempt for George because he was less capable than his brothers to compete with other boys in the ordinary tasks and amusements of a coast town. Especially was he irritated by his incapacity to share in the management of the fishing-boat in which he sometimes took his sons to sea. "That boy," he would say, "must be a *fool*. John, and Bob, and Will, are all of some use about a boat; but what will that *thing* ever be good for?" By the other boys

of the place—hardy, reckless, and boisterous youngsters, ready to encounter any risks or to be up to any mischief—George's mild and studious disposition scarcely commended itself; nor could they understand how a boy who might be playing pirate on the Alde, or in make-believe performing the daring exploits of some famous smuggler, could be content with reading to old and illiterate folk by the evening fireside. As a rule, they viewed him with mingled feelings of wonder and contempt. One day, when he was walking in the street, he chanced to offend a bigger lad, who clenched his fists to beat him; but another boy interfered on Crabbe's behalf, with the remark, "You must not meddle with *him;* let *him* alone, for he ha' got larning." But his father, while often impatient of his son's meekness and lack of boyish inclinations, could plainly see that he had gifts worth cultivating; and, at a greater expense than his own circumstances could well afford, he sent him to a good school at Bungay, and afterwards to a better one at Stowmarket.

When he was sent to Stowmarket, it had been decided that he should become a surgeon; but after his return to Aldeburgh, some time elapsed before a medical man could be found to take him as apprentice, and meanwhile his father found employment for him in his warehouse on the quay at Slaughden. To many lads such work would not have been wholly distasteful, seeing that it was carried on amid scenes in which youth can usually find abundant interest and entertainment. At that time—and it is the same to-day—Slaughden Quay was the haunt of the 'longshore fishermen engaged in the local fishing for sprats and lobsters, while the

crews of a few of the larger boats landed there catches of cod and soles. Small coasting craft also made their way up the nine miles of the Alde between Orford and Aldeburgh, and discharged on the quay their cargoes of London goods. Straggling along a narrow stretch of shingly beach between the river and the sea, the old hamlet of Slaughden seemed simply a settlement of seafarers and 'longshore folk for whom its cramped accommodation afforded a temporary convenience; and to-day, when one sees how the tidal waters of the river fret into its marish margin, and the sea itself has destroyed its pebble-built cottages and wrecked its wooden stores, it appears wonderful that any part of it should survive. In the oozy salt creeks, beside which the sea-pink grew and the sea-aster scattered its dingy seed-down, abandoned hulks lay rotting in the mud, while barges and fishing-boats, with masts aslant, waited to be floated by the rising tide. Above the tide-mark leaky boats were drawn up, to be overhauled and tarred by the men who apart from them had no means of livelihood; in the weather-beaten sheds and stores, fishermen with their wives and daughters mended torn nets and tattered sails. Around the walls of the old cottages the shingle was piled by the waves almost up to the sills of the lower windows, and, driven from tottering tenements which the next storm would destroy, whole families of fisher-folk had sought shelter in condemned ships, which, dismasted and worm-eaten, lay stranded by the riverside. On the higher grounds and shingle ridges the sea poppy waved its large yellow flowers in the wind, and the rare creeping sea pea brightened the barren soil with its purple blossoms;

there, too, the creaking tern and the piping ringed plover hollowed out their simple nests; but down by the quay the hamlet wore a less attractive aspect.

> "Here samphire banks and saltwort bound the flood,
> There stakes and seaweed withering on the mud;
> And higher up a ridge of all things base,
> Which some strong tide has roll'd upon the place."

The quay, the shingly footpaths, and the net-stores were the haunts of ancient mariners; but their principal meeting-place, and the scene of many a noisy carousal, was the old inn which faced the river and turned its back on the sea. There the smugglers came—some boastful and boisterous, others silent and mysterious—and the youth of Aldeburgh, who had no better heroes, gazed at them with awe, and longed for the time when they themselves would be able to share in their dangerous enterprises. There, too, on stormy nights, when the roaring of the sea almost drowned the voices of the company seated on the old wooden benches, and with every new-comer to the inn there entered a wind-gust which seemed likely to burst asunder the walls of the old house, tales were told of wreck and rescue, sea-fighting and buccaneering; men who had fought under Vernon and Anson, told of the attack on Carthagena and the plundering of Paita, while others held their hearers breathless by recounting the doings of Clive in India or of Wolfe before Quebec. And at times, when the horrors of the many conflicts in which England had been engaged during the first half of the eighteenth century had been dwelt upon by returned adventurers for the benefit of home-staying folk, sudden alarm would seize upon the inhabitants of Slaughden at the

sight of some strange sail in the offing, and the fear that it might prove to be that of a "Frenchman," made an uneasy Slaughden so long as the sail remained in sight. Even to-day, as one rambles in the neighbourhood of the Three Mariners Inn—that quaint old inn with the bone of an extinct monster for a sign-board—the aspect and atmosphere of Slaughden seem to connect it with the romance of the old buccaneering and cargo-running days.

"Yon is our Quay! those smaller hoys from town,
Its various ware, for country use, bring down;
Those laden waggons, in return, impart
The country-produce to the city mart;
Hark to the clamour of that miry road,
Bounded and narrow'd by yon vessel's load;
The lumbering wealth she empties round the place,
Package, and parcel, hogshead, chest, and case:
While the loud seaman and the angry hind,
Mingling in business, bellow to the wind.
Near these a crew amphibious, in the docks,
Rear for the sea, those castles on the stocks:
See! the long keel, which soon the waves must hide;
See! the strong ribs which form the roomy side;
Bolts yielding slowly to the sturdiest stroke,
And planks which curve and crackle in the smoke.
Around the whole rise cloudy wreaths, and far
Bear the warm pungence of o'er-boiling tar.
Dabbling on shore half-naked sea-boys crowd,
Swim round the ship, or swing upon the shroud;
Or in a boat purloin'd, with paddles play,
And grow familiar with the watery way:
Young though they be, they feel whose sons they are,
They know what British seamen do and dare;
Proud of that fame, they raise and they enjoy
The rustic wonder of the village boy."

So wrote Crabbe of Slaughden Quay when his days

of tub-rolling and goods-storing had long been at an end; and it is evident that its familiar scenes remained firmly imprinted on his mind; but while those days lasted he hated their drudgery and found no recompense for it in the curious life and associations of the old hamlet between the river and the sea. So it was with relief that he at length, after replying to an advertisement, and having his proffered services accepted, set out on a drive across country to the little village of Wickhambrook, ready to commence his duties as apprentice to a master who combined farming with the practice of medicine.

With this practitioner he remained for three years; but it is doubtful whether he received any benefit from his instruction. Although professedly apprenticed to medicine, he was often employed on his master's farm, and at night he had the ploughboy for a bed-fellow. From Wickhambrook he went to Woodbridge, to conclude his apprenticeship with another doctor, Page by name. There his days were more pleasantly and advantageously spent; while there, too, he fell in love with Sarah Elmy, his "Mira," to whom he wrote lyrics as numerous as his employer's prescriptions; but at the termination of his apprenticeship, towards the end of 1775, he returned to Aldeburgh to find the affairs of his family in such a state as to afford him slight hope of completing his professional education. Led to participate in intemperate conviviality during a Parliamentary election, his father had become a regular frequenter of the local taverns, with the result that his violent temper was often inflamed by excessive drinking and the home life of his family was most miserable.

His wife was already afflicted with the illness of which she died after a few years of suffering; but notwithstanding this he often terrified her by his violent and brutal conduct; and had it not been for the care and affection bestowed upon her by her eldest son, her declining years would have been almost without a gleam of brightness to relieve their gloom. George had no sooner taken up his abode again beneath his father's roof than he saw that his mother's illness must have a fatal ending, and he at once became her physician and comforter.

His intention, however, was to take the first opportunity to go to London and there complete his studies; and it was with dismay he realized that his father's circumstances would not permit of this, and that his only immediate prospect of earning a livelihood, and of contributing in a measure towards his mother's comfort, lay in the direction of the much-loathed Slaughden Quay. Yet there he had to go once more, don the garb of a dock labourer, and devote his time to rolling to and fro the detested butter-tubs. Nor was his dislike of the work lessened by the consciousness that the acquaintances he had made while at Woodbridge were aware of the kind of labour he—the would-be physician—was engaged in. But the hard necessities of his case compelled him to pocket his pride and submit to the jibes of his erstwhile comrades. During his leisure hours he occupied himself with the natural history of the seashore, heaths, and salt marshes, and especially with the study of botany, thereby acquiring much of that knowledge of birds and flowers which afterwards enabled him to picture so faithfully the wild life and scenery of his home-land.

After some months had been passed in uncongenial occupation, a small sum of money was scraped together, and he sailed for London on board one of the little trading craft which visited Slaughden Quay; but in less than twelve months he was back again, having found it impossible, with his slender means, to make any headway in town. He then sought and found employment in the shop of a local surgeon and apothecary named Maskill, a stern and despotic man from whom he received most galling treatment. Indeed, at the outset of their business relations, Crabbe was unfortunate enough to offend grievously this fiery medico by spelling his name *Mask-well.* "Damn you, sir," exclaimed the irate man, "do you take me for a proficient in deception? Mask-*ill*—Mask-*ill;* and so you shall find me." But not many weeks elapsed before Mr. Maskill decided to transfer himself to another town, and, feeling, in all probability, that he would never be more fitted than he was then to commence such operations, George ventured to step into the deserted practice. He had, however, a clever and active practitioner to contend with for a share of Aldeburgh's patronage, and he was unequal to the contest.

"His very passion for botany," says his son, "was injurious to him; for his ignorant patients, seeing him return from his walks with handfuls of weeds, decided that, as Dr. Crabbe got his medicines in the ditches, he could have little claim for payment. On the other hand, he had many poor relations; and some of these, old women, were daily visitors, to request 'something comfortable from cousin George;' that is to say, doses of the most expensive tonics in his possession."

Occasionally fortune smiled on him for a brief while, as when the Warwickshire Militia, and afterwards the Norfolk Militia, were quartered in the town and he was appointed their medical attendant: by the Colonel of the Warwickshires, Conway, the cousin of Horace Walpole, he was presented with some valuable books on botany. But the intervals of sunshine were rare in those overcast years, and only the steady affection of his "Mira," and the stimulus of his mother's needs, kept him from sinking into despair.

At this time Miss Elmy, though living with her uncle at Parham, occasionally visited her parents at Beccles, and the happiest episodes of Crabbe's life during the long years of their courtship were his meetings with her in the little town on the banks of the Waveney. To enjoy the sweet companionship of this faithful girl, the ardent lover would walk the long distance from Aldeburgh to Beccles, through scenery he has described in his "Lover's Journey."

> "First o'er a barren heath, beside the coast,
> Orlando rode, and joy began to boast.
> 'This neat low gorse,' said he, 'with golden bloom,
> Delights each sense, is beauty, is perfume;
> And this gay ling, with all its purple flowers,
> A man of leisure might admire for hours;
> This green-fringed cup-moss has a scarlet tip,
> That yields to nothing but my Laura's lip;
> And then how fine this herbage! men may say
> A heath is barren; nothing is so gay.'"

But he must have been a slow-footed lover who, starting when the ling was flowering, saw the "snow-white bloom" fall "flaky from the thorn" before he reached his journey's end; and it was unworthy of so

skilled a botanist as Crabbe to take advantage of "poetic license" to the extent of making so many spring and autumn wild flowers bloom together as he does in the "Lover's Journey."

The Life of Crabbe written by his son is one of the best of biographies; but there are one or two points in respect to the poet's career not made quite clear, and one of these is his precise reason for suddenly making up his mind to abandon Aldeburgh and the medical profession and embark on so uncertain an enterprise as going to London again with the idea of gaining a livelihood by writing poetry. But like George Borrow some fifty years later, he seems to have suddenly made up his mind to venture on what must have seemed to him a "forlorn hope"; and there is at least a possibility that the solution of the secret might have been found in "Mira." Miss Elmy, we are told, "was too prudent to marry, where there seemed to be no chance of a competent livelihood," and it may be that, finding her firm in this decision, and seeing no prospect of success rewarding his drudgery in his native town, he decided to try his fortune in a wider sphere.

"One gloomy day, towards the close of the year 1779," writes his son, "he had strolled to a bleak and cheerless part of the cliff above Aldeburgh, called 'The Marsh Hill,' brooding, as he went, over the humiliating necessities of his condition, and plucking every now and then, I have no doubt, the hundredth specimen of some common weed. He stopped opposite a shallow, muddy piece of water, as desolate and gloomy as his own mind, called the Leech-pond, and 'it was while I gazed on it,' —he said to my brother and me, one happy morning,— 'that I determined to go to London and venture all.'"

Having come to this decision, he wrote to Mr. Dudley North, brother of the candidate for Aldeburgh, begging the loan of a small sum to enable him to carry out his purpose. A "very extraordinary letter it was," Mr. North remarked to him some years afterwards: "I did not hesitate for a moment." The sum he received was five pounds; and after settling his affairs in Aldeburgh, George, with a box of clothes, a small case of surgical instruments, and three pounds in his pocket, sailed for London on board the lugger *Unity*, which was then owned by the grandfather of the late Archdeacon Hindes Groome.

It is wonderful that a shy, uncouth, and unsuccessful countryman should have started on such a venture; it is even more wonderful that, going to London friendless and with no means of bringing his talents before the public, he, in less than two years, should have made his mark as a man of letters, firmly established himself in the friendship and confidence of some of the most distinguished and influential men of his day, and, notwithstanding his being to a large extent a self-educated man, qualified himself for, and been admitted to, deacon's orders. A few months later he was ordained a priest in Norwich Cathedral, and, probably at his own request, licensed as curate to the rector of his native town. The amazement of Aldeburgh at his reappearance under such circumstances must have been great, and there were times when Crabbe himself could hardly realize that he was not dreaming. That he, the despised quay labourer and rejected apothecary, should now be pointed out as the friend of such men as Burke, Fox, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, was alone some recompense for the

slights to which he had been subjected; and Crabbe would have been more than human if he had not felt some pride in his changed condition. But he seems to have preserved his mental balance well under circumstances calculated to upset his judgment, and it was not long before he found out that in selecting Aldeburgh to be the scene of his first ministries as a clergyman he had chosen anything but a "bed of roses." Indeed, the reception he met with was far from cordial, and he soon discovered that while some might point to him as the friend of distinguished men, others—and these were more numerous—were only reminded by the sight of him of butter-tubs and black draughts. Every old adventure in which he had cut a sorry figure was raked up against him; nor were those who laughed at him particular as to the truth of the story. Years after, on being asked how he felt when he entered the pulpit at Aldeburgh for the first time, he said:—"I had been unkindly received at the place—I saw unfriendly faces about me, and, I am sorry to say, I had too much indignation, though mingled, I hope, with better feelings, to care what they thought of me or my sermon." Had he stayed in the town, no doubt he would have "lived down" his dismal past; but during the few months which elapsed between his appointment to the curacy and his acceptance of the domestic chaplaincy of Belvoir, the Rev. George Crabbe was unable to banish from the recollection of his parishioners that Dr. Crabbe who had sometimes tried to drive away despondency by joining in convivial gatherings at the old White Lion inn.

This fact, together with the sustained prudence of

Miss Elmy, who considered a curate as bad a match as an unsuccessful surgeon, caused Crabbe to accept without hesitation the Duke of Rutland's offer of the chaplaincy; and, after taking his departure from Aldeburgh under these circumstances, his appearances in the town, though not infrequent, were chiefly due to holiday visits. But during several years of his life—after his "Mira" had at last consented to share his improved fortunes—he was a resident within a few miles of his old coast-town, and in another chapter something more will be said about his associations with his native county. At the time, however, when his home was at Rendham, he had at least one interesting experience at Aldeburgh, and that was when the firing of some guns at sea, and the loud report of a big alarm-gun in the martello tower at Slaughden, caused the inhabitants of the town to believe that the French were about to attempt a landing on their shingly beach. The poet, we are told, was informed of this supposed imminent danger; but less than an hour after he had heard the news he was discovered fast asleep; on hearing of which indifference or passive submission to fate, there were "suspicious head-shakings among the ultra-loyalists" of the town. But as he grew older, and the few links which bound him to Aldeburgh snapped one by one, he had less and less inclination to revisit the scenes amid which the most miserable days of his life had been passed. About twelve months before his death, he wrote to a Beccles friend—

"I should rejoice to revisit Beccles, where every one is kind to me, and where every object I view has the appearance of friendship and welcome. Beccles is the

home of past years, and I could not walk through the streets as a stranger. It is not so at Aldeburgh: there a sadness mixes with all I see or hear; not a man is living whom I knew in my early portion of life; my contemporaries are gone, and their successors are unknown to me and I to them. Yet, in my last visit, my niece and I passed an old man, and she said, 'There is one you should know; you played together as boys, and he looks as if he wanted to tell you so.' Of course, I stopped on my way, and Zekiel Thorpe and I became once more acquainted. This is sadly tedious to you; but you need not be told that old men love to dwell upon their Recollections."

In Aldeburgh parish church there is a bust of Crabbe, and in the churchyard, just under the east wall of the church, are the simple gravestones marking where his parents are buried; but the Aldeburgh of to-day so little resembles the Aldeburgh of a century ago that it is of little use attempting to see in it the scenes described in the poet's "Village" and "Borough." Indeed, "The Borough," though commenced during a visit to his native town, treats of a far larger place than Aldeburgh can ever have been, even in its palmiest days, when the sea had as yet made no inroads upon its low-lying streets; and although some of the characters in the poem were probably drawn from men and women Crabbe had met there, he has placed them in what a friend of his called a "magnified Aldeburgh," and it is only at Slaughden and in the country lying inland, northward, and southward of the old sea-wasted town that we find ourselves amid scenes we can recognize as having been finely and faithfully described by him. For the salt marsh shores of the tidal Alde, the fen-like

lowlands lying inland of the Crag Path leading from the town to Thorpe, and the sandy heaths of the higher lands, are much as they were when Crabbe knew them and, wandering there, found relief from his despondency in dreams of love and fame. And it is his pictures of these scenes which make his East Anglian admirers appreciate him as a Suffolk, as well as an English poet. For a true poet he was, though the world would be none the poorer if it lost more than half of what he printed. Notwithstanding all that has been urged against him by his many detractors, he has written much that will "live," and his unperverted realism will always be valued by those who in poetry seek truth before pleasing imagery.

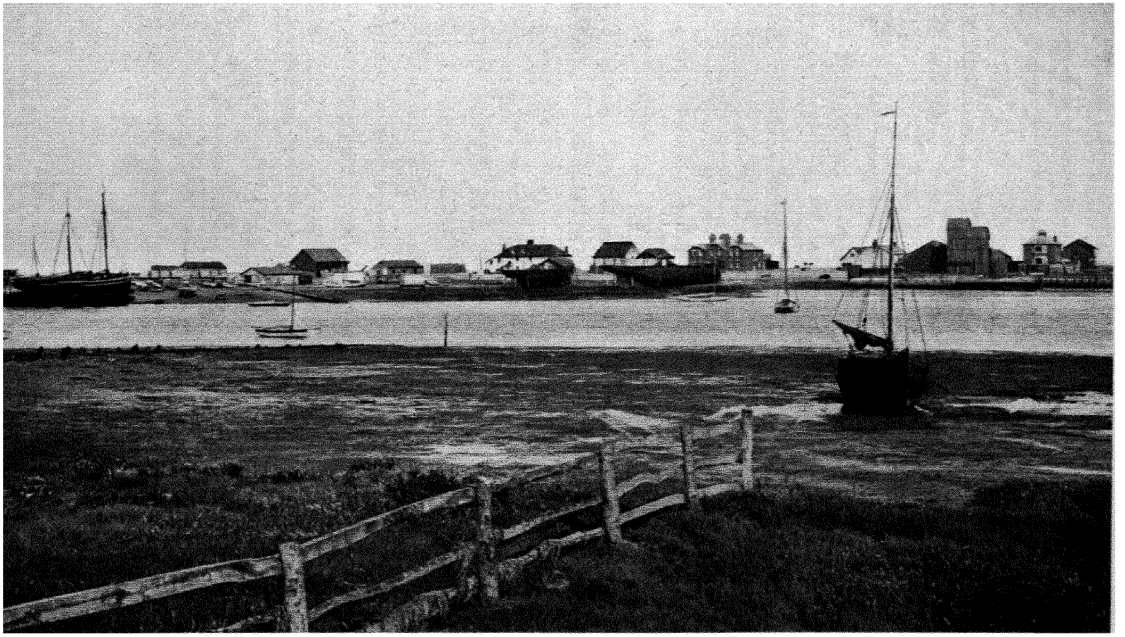
"Give him the darkest inch your shelf allows,
Hide him in lonely garrets, if you will—
But his hard human pulse is throbbing still
With the sure strength that fearless truth endows,
In spite of all fine science disavows.
Of his plain excellence and stubborn skill
There yet remains what fashion cannot kill,
Though years have thinned the laurel from his brows.
Whether or not we read him, we can feel
From time to time the vigour of his name
Against us like a finger for the shame
And emptiness of what our souls reveal
In books that are as altars where we kneel
To consecrate the flicker, not the flame." [1]

Edward FitzGerald, a critic not without his prejudices, but, for all that, one with keen insight and delicate feeling, always had a great admiration for the writings of Crabbe, mainly because he himself was a

[1] Edward Arlington Robinson.

lover of that homely life in describing which the poet excelled. He brought out a little book entitled "Readings from Crabbe," because he felt that he was not appreciated as he should be, and that that was because few readers had the patience to seek out what was best in him. All his life he was fond of dipping into Crabbe's works and quoting him to his friends, and, although he loved Aldeburgh for itself—"There is no sea like the Aldeburgh sea. It talks to me," he once said—it was as the birthplace of the poet and the scene of his early troubles and trials, that it had its chief appeal to him. He used to say that he had lodged in half the houses in the town at one time or another; but he generally stayed at the White Lion or at Clare Cottage, where he hired two small rooms and a spare bedroom for any of his friends who might choose to visit him. Slaughden Quay was one of his favourite haunts. "The melancholy of Slaughden last night, with the same sloops sticking sidelong in the mud as sixty years ago!" he wrote to Charles Keene, in July, 1880. Once he met here an ancient mariner who had sailed on board the lugger *Unity*, in which Crabbe went up to London, though not of course, until some years later. Here he came with Carlyle during the latter's visit to Woodbridge; and here, too, he made the acquaintance of Professor Fawcett, the Postmaster-General, whom he was always delighted to see, blind as he was, "stalking along the beach, regardless of pebble and boulder, though with some one by his side to prevent his going quite to sea;" and in the course of their walks and talks together, he made him a worshipper of Crabbe.

There are still a few people in Aldeburgh who can



SLAUGHDEN

remember seeing FitzGerald slowly pacing the Crag Path between the salt marsh and the sea. It was at Aldeburgh that he read Cunningham's "Darien Song"—

> "Oh there were white hands wav'd,
> And many a parting hail,
> As their vessel stemm'd the tide,
> And stretch'd the snowy sail;"

and afterwards, whenever he read it, he found that "the sound of the sea hangs about it always, as upon the lips of a shell." In later years he thought Aldeburgh "half spoilt," owing to the many new houses built to accommodate its increasing number of summer visitors; but the old names of the salt creeks, cliff clefts, and sandbanks continued to have for him a romantic suggestiveness.

"I have, like you, always have, and from a child had, a mysterious feeling about the 'Sizewell Gap,'" he wrote to Keene. "There were reports of kegs of Hollands found under the Altar Cloth of Theberton Church near by, and we children looked with awe on the 'Revenue Cutters' which passed Aldbro', especially remembering one that went down with all hands, *The Ranger*."

FitzGerald paid his last visit to Aldeburgh in the September before his death. About that time he renewed his friendship with a play-mate of his childhood, a Miss Lynn, who lived here in a house called "Tiffany." The renewal of this friendship is described by his biographer as "the last bright gleam of his life." With Miss Lynn he talked of old days at Aldeburgh; of her uncle, his old friend Major Moor; and at times she would read to him from what he called her "Mudie

Books." He gave her copies of some of his writings; but he would not include among them the "Omar Khayyám," telling her that "she would not like it." "He was very careful," said Miss Lynn after his death, "not to unsettle the religious opinions of others."

CHAPTER IV

IN AND ABOUT FRAMLINGHAM

The small towns of Suffolk—A royal town—Framlingham Castle—Bernard Barton—The Howards, Dukes of Norfolk—Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey—His birthplace—His boyhood—His marriage—"The most foolish proud boy that is in England"—The King's favour—Disgrace—Sir Thomas Wyatt—Surrey at Norwich—Thomas Churchyard—Surrey charged with high treason—Condemned and executed—His tomb in Framlingham Church—John Cordy Jeaffreson—"Literary Framlingham"—Thackeray—Andrew Arcedeckne—The original of Mr. Foker.

SUFFOLK is a county of small towns which are little more than villages, and apart from those among them which are situated on the coast, and in consequence are disturbed from their accustomed somnolence in summer by invading hosts of holiday-makers, these little old-world towns seem so out of touch with modern life that a stranger no sooner enters one of them than he becomes conscious of influences being exerted which help him to understand what provincial life was like, not only in the coaching days, but in days when during the greater part of each year the highways and byways of rural England were in such a state that a regularly organized system of road travelling was a convenience undreamt of even by the most enterprising minds. Over the narrow streets the upper storeys

of old, half-timbered houses bend as though seeking support, after centuries of top-heaviness, against the walls across the way; on the plastered shop fronts, on the brackets of the projecting latticed windows, and in the spandrels of old doorways leading into panelled halls and stone-paved courts, there are curious heraldic carvings reminding one of lords and abbots of feudal times; here and there stands a guildhall almost unaltered since it was founded; and not infrequently the massive fragments of a Norman castle amid huge earthworks establishes for the place an antiquity to which many a thronged city has no claim. On market-day, when the old-fashioned farm-folk with corn samples in their pockets come to shake their heads over some "new-fangled" American farming implement exhibited near the market cross or before the corn hall, there is some slight stir in the usually silent streets, and country customers summon the listless tradesman from his "living-room" behind the shop; but the stir is of as temporary duration as the breeze which sometimes ripples a calm lake on a sultry summer day: it soon passes, and all is still again. To say that these old towns are "behind the times" is to tell only half the truth. Some of them seem to have lost all inclination to advance with the times hundreds of years ago.

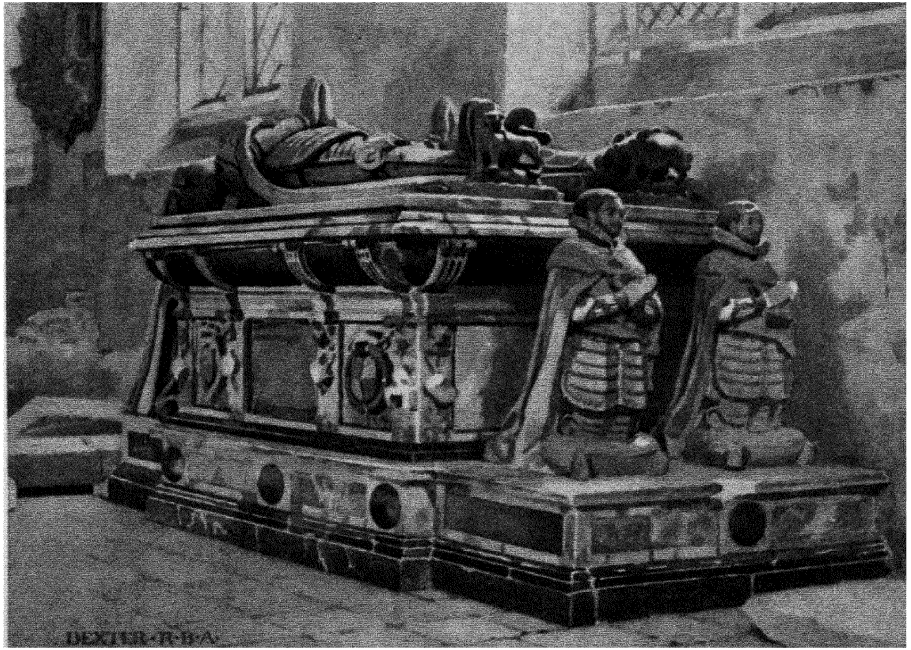
One of the smaller of these ancient towns—its population is well under three thousand—is Framlingham; and the fact of its being the terminus of a little branch line of railway which starts off into the wilds of Mid Suffolk, and then stops suddenly as though alarmed at its temerity, can hardly be put forward by it as a pretension to active importance or wide renown. Yet

Framlingham, if the tradition be credible, was once the royal town of an East Anglian king; later on it was the stronghold of the Bigods—the most turbulent and influential baronial family in the eastern counties; and at the death of Edward VI. its grand old castle—beside which the town seems dwarfed into insignificance—became the rallying-point of the English Catholics, who came to Framlingham to offer their services to Princess Mary, and soon afterwards placed her on the Throne. To-day you may often stroll from end to end of the town in broad daylight without seeing more than a dozen people, and even at midday so deep a silence broods over the place that one can hardly believe it has ever awakened from an age-long sleep; but to stand directly under the walls of that mighty castle of the Earls and Dukes of Norfolk—that castle in the shadow of which the little town lies like a suppliant at the feet of one of the great ones of the earth—is to be reminded of some of the most important events in English history, and of associations of which not only Framlingham, but all East Anglia, may well be proud. Her Quaker poet, Bernard Barton, wrote very few verses which were destined to outlive him; but in writing of Framlingham Castle he at least caught something of the spirit of the place—

"But thou, at least to distant view,
Still bear'st a gallant form,
Thy canopy—Heaven's vault of blue,
Or crest—the lowering storm.
Still upon moat and mere below
Thine ivied towers look down,
And far their giant shadows throw,
With feudal grandeur's frown.

"And though thy star for aye be set,
Thy glory past and gone;
Fancy might deem thine inmate yet
Bigod or Brotherton!
Or Howard brave, who fought and died
On Bosworth's bloody field;
Or bigot Mary—who the tide
Of martyr blood unseal'd."

After the manor of Framlingham was granted to the Bigods by Henry I., the castle was for several centuries the home of a succession of Earls and Dukes of Norfolk, who took a prominent part in war and politics, insurrection, and intrigue. First there were the Bigods, who were nearly always in revolt against the Crown. Then, after being held for a while by a son of Edward I., the possession of the castle passed by marriage to that William de Ufford, Earl of Suffolk, who died suddenly in the Parliament House at Westminster in 1381; and from him it passed to a Mowbray who died at Venice about 1399. A little later we find it held by that famous old soldier, Sir Thomas Erpingham, who fought at Agincourt; and he was succeeded by another Mowbray, who, condemned on a charge of rebellion, was beheaded at York. Several subsequent generations of Mowbrays dwelt within its massive walls, the last representative of the family here being that little Lady Anne, who, when only three years old, was espoused to that Richard, Duke of York, who with his brother was murdered in the Tower. Then it was that the Howards came upon the scene, and the first of them to possess Framlingham was that John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, who died on Bosworth Field; but ere long a far more famous military leader in the victor of Flodden had his home in the grey old castle. And



TOMB OF HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY

until 1635, when the castle was sold to Sir Robert Hitcham, the powerful Howards held this ancient stronghold, save during the frequent intervals in which one or another of them was under suspicion of having designs against the Crown.

These associations with Framlingham of the names of men who distinguished themselves in plotting and fighting, sometimes for and sometimes against the Crown, would have no immediate interest for us if it were not that among the many famous Howards there was one who distinguished himself in the domain of letters as well as on the battlefield. This was Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, for whom it is claimed that he may justly be regarded as the first English classical poet. That he spent much of his time at Framlingham seems improbable, for he had other homes in East Anglia which must have been far more convenient and comfortable than the old moated castle; but he was often in Suffolk, as well as in Norfolk, and it was to Framlingham that his body was brought to find a final resting-place, though not till long after his execution.

Surrey was a Suffolk man by birth, for he was born at Tendring Hall, in the parish of Stoke-by-Nayland; but he was known in his early life as Henry Howard of Kenninghall, after the great Norfolk ducal palace which has long been destroyed. Of the first few years of his life we know little, save that he seems to have spent the greater part of them at Tendring Hall, where the daily nursery fare consisted of a "racke or cheyne of mutton and a checkyn," save on Fridays and Saturdays, when he and his brothers and sisters had to be content with "a dyshe of buttermylke and six egges." Occasionally

he visited his grandfather at Hunsdon, in Hertfordshire, or at Kenninghall; and when he was about twelve years old we hear of him as a guest at the old priory at Butley, in Suffolk, where he went while his father was arranging the sale of that fine old tract of oak forest, Staverton Park, to the prior. Much care appears to have been taken over his education, especially in classical and modern literature; and it is thought likely that he had the advantage of the assistance of John Leland, the eminent antiquary, who was his brother's tutor, though his own special instructor seems to have been John Clerk, who was domesticated with the Howard family. In the same year that Surrey was at Butley, Henry VIII. asked that he might be sent to Windsor to become the companion of Henry Fitzroy, Earl of Richmond, the king's natural son; and, the Duke of Norfolk consenting, the youthful poet took up his residence amid those scenes with which Pope associated him when he wrote—

> "Here noble Surrey felt the sacred rage;
> Surrey, the Granville of a former age:
> Matchless his pen, victorious was his lance,
> Bold in the lists, and graceful in the dance:
> In the same shades the Cupids tun'd his lyre,
> To the same notes of love and soft desire."

Three years later Surrey was married to Frances, daughter of John Vere, fifteenth Earl of Oxford, who had a seat at the old cloth-weaving town of Lavenham, only a few miles from Tendring Hall. Owing to their youth, however, the young husband and wife did not live together until 1535, when they met at Kenninghall, where, finding himself in financial difficulties, Surrey

seems to have started housekeeping on money borrowed from the Abbot of Bury.

Although described by a contemporary as "the most foolish, proud boy that is in England," and notwithstanding that he seems to have been a hot-tempered and headstrong youth, Surrey was for some years high in the King's favour. As Southey tells us, he was, in the year of his marriage, one of the nobles who accompanied Henry to his interview with the French king at Boulogne, and at the coronation of Anne Boleyn he acted for his father as Lord High Chamberlain. But—

"that was an age in which a dear price was paid for pre-eminence in rank. Anne Boleyn was his kinswoman and friend ; yet Surrey was compelled to appear at her iniquitous trial, as representing his father in the character of Earl Marshal ; the Duke in his own person presiding as Lord High Steward. He was one of the chief mourners at the funeral of Queen Jane, and one of the defendants at the jousts upon the marriage of Queen Anne of Cleves. Soon afterwards he was made Knight of the Garter. This was the season of his highest favour. It was followed by disgrace and imprisonment for having challenged John à Leigh, of Stockwell, upon a private quarrel. On his release he accompanied his father to the war in Scotland, and was present when Kelsall was burnt. He had then to answer before the Privy Council upon two charges: the one was for eating meat in Lent; the other for breaking windows in the streets of London with a cross-bow in the dead of night. For the first he pleaded a licence, but confessed that he had made use of it too publicly ; for the second he made the strange excuse that being shocked at the licentiousness of the citizens, he thought that by thus alarming them he might put them in mind of the

suddenness of God's judgments, and so awaken them to repentance."

In his window-breaking mischief he was assisted by his great friend and brother poet, Sir Thomas Wyatt, who was thirteen years his senior and should have known better. At any rate, such an escapade hardly fits in with Tennyson's description of Wyatt as—

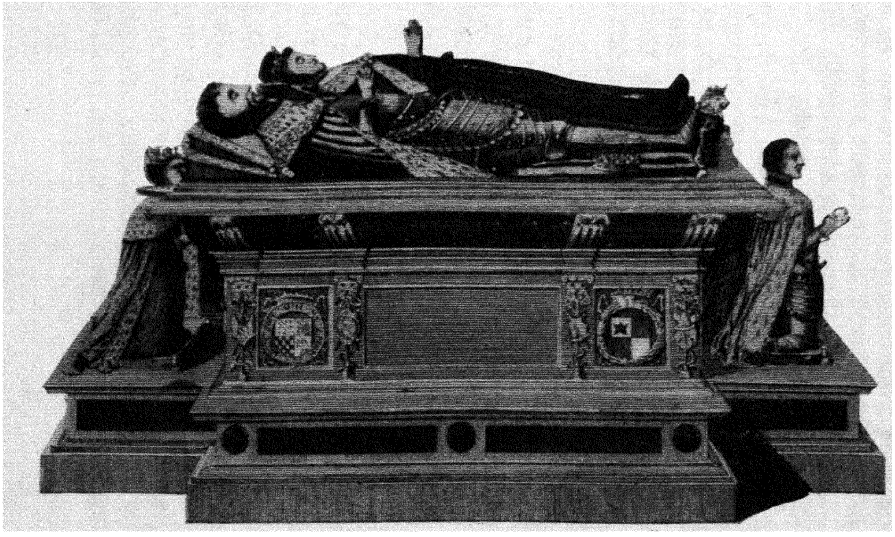
> "Courtier of many courts, he loved the more
> His own grey towers, plain life, and lettered peace,
> To read and rhyme in solitary fields,
> The lark above, the nightingale below,
> And answer them in song."

Soon after his marriage Surrey had a house in Norwich called Surrey House, situated in a street which still goes by his name; but about two years before his death, and about the time when he was engaged as marshal of the army at the siege of Montreuil, there was built for him a fine palace on the site of St. Leonard's Priory, on Mousehold Heath, near Norwich. There, it is believed, he had as a page the soldier-poet Thomas Churchyard, whom D'Israeli describes as "one of those unfortunate men who had written poetry all their days and lived a long life to complete the misfortune." But Surrey was fated to spend little time in his new home on the breezy heath above the ancient Norfolk city; for after being deprived of his command in France—a disgrace he owed to the jealousy of the Seymours and their influence with the King—he was imprisoned in Windsor Castle. He was soon released, and appeared to have regained the King's favour; but the Seymours continued their plotting against him and

his father the Duke, and on December 12, 1546, he was committed to the Tower on the charge of high treason. The legal ground on which this preposterous charge was based was a section of some recent statutes which made it high treason "to do anything, by word, writing, or deed, to the scandal or peril of the established succession to the Crown;" but the only act on his part which could be urged against him was his having adopted the armorial bearing of Edward the Confessor, which had hitherto been used only by the Kings of England. Surrey defended himself with eloquence and spirit. He proved that the arms had been assigned to him by the heralds, and that he had worn them for fourteen years without giving offence; but the fact of his having worn them was taken as sufficient evidence that he had aspired to the throne. Among the witnesses who were compelled to give evidence against him was his father's mistress, who could only say that the Duke had blamed his son for want of skill in quartering the family arms and had spoken with warmth against the "new nobility," meaning the Seymours. But the prosecutors were not content with this. The prisoner's sister, the Duchess of Richmond, was brought up to confirm the statement that her father and her brother had spoken ill of the "new nobility," and to declare that Surrey had worn on his arms, instead of the ducal coronet, what she took to be a close crown and "the King's cipher, H.R." On this evidence Surrey was condemned to death, and it is far from creditable to Norfolk that among the names of the twelve jurymen are those of representatives of the ancient county families of Paston, Boleyn, Wodehouse, L'Estrange, Hobart, and Bedingfeld. At the time

when the trial was going on, King Henry was lying on his death-bed, and, as Sir James Mackintosh says, "as the King's sick-bed was surrounded by Surrey's enemies, it must always be uncertain whether the hand of Henry was, even in the lowest bodily sense, affixed to the instrument which warranted the execution;" but, however that may have been, the death warrant was signed, and about a week after his trial the unfortunate young soldier and poet died on the scaffold. His body was first interred in the church of All Hallows, Barking, in Tower Street; but in the year 1614 his second son Henry, Earl of Northampton, caused it to be brought to Framlingham and buried in the chancel of the parish church, where he erected a fine tomb to his memory. On this tomb there are recumbent effigies of Surrey and his wife, while at the ends are kneeling figures of their two sons and three daughters. According to Miss Agnes Strickland, the historian of the Queens of England, "the portrait statue of the son kneeling at the feet of his father's recumbent statue . . . proves him, and such is the fact, to have resembled his relative Queen Anne Boleyn. His dark eyes and dark curls, and the beautiful outline of his face, rendered him more like her than was her daughter, Queen Elizabeth."

Owing to a lack of the sum necessary to restore it, the spacious chancel of Framlingham Church is in a sad state of dilapidation, and it is now boarded off from the nave in which the services are held; but the magnificent tombs of the Howards are in good preservation. Indeed, the chancel may be looked upon as a mausoleum of that ancient and famous family; for besides the tomb of the Earl of Surrey (which has the more westerly



TOMB OF HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY

FROM LODER'S "HISTORY OF FRAMLINGHAM"

position of two on the north side) there is that of his father Thomas Howard, third Duke of Norfolk, who but for the death of Henry VIII. would have met with the fate of his unhappy son. This tomb has fine effigies of the Duke and his second wife, his first wife, Anne, daughter of Edward IV., being in all probability buried in Lambeth Chapel. Another tomb is surmounted by effigies of the two wives of the fourth duke, and close beside it is interred his daughter Elizabeth, while immediately north of the altar is the tomb of Henry the Eighth's natural son, Henry Fitzroy, Earl of Richmond, the early friend and companion of Surrey. He is buried here with his wife, who was that Lady Mary Howard whose evidence at the trial of her brother so largely contributed to his condemnation. But it is the tomb of Surrey which among all these massive monuments awakens the saddest thoughts; for by the untimely death of that unhappy nobleman England was robbed of a poet of whom it has been said that his genius had been surpassed in his own country only by that of Chaucer. He has been described as "a brilliant light in a dark age," and even the most discriminating of his critics have admitted that in his works there is such splendid promise that had he lived longer he might have made for himself a place among our greatest poets.

At the beginning of this chapter, writing from the point of view of an occasional visitor, I have referred to the apparent listlessness of life in Framlingham; but I would not have it thought that in mentioning this I am suggesting something derogatory to the quaint old town, the "restfulness" of which is one of its chief

charms. One needs to live in such a town to be able to write of it from any point of view but that of an "outsider," and it is only fair to the inhabitants of Framlingham to bear in mind that the late John Cordy Jeaffreson—who was a native of Framlingham, spent the early years of his life here, and was intimately associated with the town so long as he lived—was by no means disposed to consider it a "sleepy" place.

"So much," he writes, "is said now-a-days by novelists of the dullness and torpor of small country-towns, that I shall probably surprise some readers . . . by speaking of Framlingham, *i.e.* the Framlingham of my youth and early manhood, as more remarkable for gaiety than sleepiness. Lying twenty miles away from the nearest railway-station and five miles from a turnpike road, it was an out-of-the-way and secluded place, and very tranquil in comparison with the larger villages of the main highways. . . . But, though it was secluded and tranquil, Framlingham was far from a sleepy and sluggish place. Life went on pleasantly, and sometimes even briskly in and about the picturesque town. As one of a large family, with six elder sisters, and some of them marvellously clever sisters, overflowing with droll gossip, and quick at repartee, I was never in want of bright companions when I had done my work in the surgery. The town had no collection of books to be spoken of seriously as a good library, but every house of the upper ten families had so goodly a lot of books, to which we all had access, that I and my sisters were nearly as well provided with standard literature as we should have been, had my father possessed the finest library of the county. The best of the new literature came to us through one of the old-fashioned club-libraries, far more promptly than books 'in great demand' come to country-towns now-a-days from the monstrous circulating libraries of recent invention. The

best novels, the best biographies, the best books of travel, we got them all whilst they were still new literature. Thanks to a spirited little bookseller . . . Dickens's green leaves dropt into our hands wet from the press."

In the early chapters of his "Book of Recollections," Cordy Jeaffreson gossips very entertainingly about life in the Woodland district around Framlingham in the middle of the last century. His father was a well-known surgeon, who would probably have made a big reputation had he chosen to practise in London, instead of in a remote little country town; and it was Dr. Jeaffreson's hope that his son would become his partner and succeed him in the practice; but Cordy Jeaffreson had other views, which led to his becoming the author of "A Book about the Clergy," "A Book about Doctors," and a novelist of some repute. He was an intimate friend of Thackeray, of whom he has left us some interesting reminiscences; and he also had the questionable advantage of the acquaintance of Mr. Andrew Arcedeckne, the original of the Mr. Foker in "Pendennis." Andrew Arcedeckne, who was descended from a barrister who became attorney-general of Jamaica, had his home at Glevering Hall, in the parish of Hacheston, a few miles south-east of Framlingham; but he was too poor to "keep up" the hall, so usually lived at some inn in the neighbourhood. He is described by Jeaffreson as having been—

"a smart slangy, ludicrous person—an extravagant caricature of Albert Smith's 'gent,' in respect to his manners and speech—he was assiduous in his attentions to those actors and actresses of whom he was a sort of

patron. Hanging about the theatres, he aimed at distinguishing himself as an amateur actor in low comedy. . . . At the White Horse, of Ipswich, or the Bull, of Woodbridge, where, for a few pounds a week he was lord of the host, and enjoyed the idolatry of the boots and barmaid, Mr. Arcedeckne made himself at home for days and even weeks at a time, revelling in the homage rendered him night after night by the tradesmen of the town and the commercial travellers, to whom he sung his comic songs or performed his comic parts. The gentleman's language, style, humour were inexpressibly absurd."

Jeaffreson admits that Thackeray was wrong in introducing this eccentric person into "Pendennis" as a typical young Englishman; but denies that he either caricatured or maligned him.

"Minimizing his vulgarity, he toned down his more offensive characteristics and emphasized his genial qualities, so that the Foker of the novel became a far more agreeable fellow than the Arcedeckne of real life."

And "though he (Arcedeckne) affected to regard the too personal portrait as an impertinence that justified him in speaking of the great novelist as a tuft-hunter and snob, and in addressing him saucily as 'Thack,'" Jeaffreson "cannot imagine that he was at any time acutely pained by it."

CHAPTER V

WITH CRABBE AT PARHAM

The Old Hall—Farmer Tovell—A yeoman's home a century ago—Little Glemham Hall—Crabbe and Fox—Crabbe's life at Glemham—Crabbe as a preacher—"The Parish Register"—"Sir Eustace Grey"—Crabbe and opium—"Morbid inspiration"—The last years in Suffolk—Rendham.

IN the neighbourhood of Framlingham we take up again the tale of the poet Crabbe's associations with his native county; for it was at Parham, a charming little village only a mile or two along the Wickham Market road, that Crabbe was so frequently a guest of that sturdy yeoman farmer, John Tovell, whose niece, Sarah Elmy, became the poet's wife. But Parham, although in the centre of a district famous for its old moated halls and farmhouses, and still possessing in its Moat Hall, the old home of the Willoughbys, one of the most picturesque houses of its kind in Suffolk, has unfortunately lost its "Old Hall," except in so far as a few portions of it may be embodied in the house now occupying its site. This house stands on some rather high ground to the right of the road leading from Parham to the village of Hacheston, but in outward appearance there is nothing about it to suggest the curious old-world life that the inmates of the Old Hall lived in the days

when the impecunious young apothecary, who was afterwards to distinguish himself in the literary world, used to come over from Woodbridge or Aldeburgh to stroll with his sweetheart along the quiet Parham lanes. In those days Farmer Tovell rather despised the bookish youth, whose ignorance of farm matters seemed to him as culpable as his ignorance of seamanship had appeared to his father; and in his hearing, when his "book-learning" was discussed, he would often ask what good the "d——d learning" could ever be to him; but afterwards, when the erstwhile apothecary and dock-labourer had become a successful poet and the rector of Muston, he had a very different reception when he came to stay for a while beneath the blunt old yeoman's roof. This we can gather from the Rev. George Crabbe's biography of his father, in which he has given us what is perhaps the best description extant of life in a yeoman farmer's home a century ago.

"On the third day we reached Parham," writes the Rev. George Crabbe, "and I was introduced to a set of manners and customs, of which there remains, perhaps, no counterpart in the present day. My great-uncle's establishment was that of a first-rate yeoman of that period—the Yeoman that had already began to be styled by courtesy an Esquire. Mr. Tovell might possess an estate of some eight hundred pounds per annum, a portion of which he himself cultivated. Educated at a mercantile school, he often said of himself, 'Jack will never make a gentleman'; yet he had a native dignity of mind and of manners which might have enabled him to pass muster in that character with any but very fastidious critics. His house was large, and the surrounding moat, the rookery, the ancient dove-cot, and the well-stored fishponds, were such as might have suited a gentleman's

seat of some consequence; but one side of the house immediately overlooked a farmyard, full of all sorts of domestic animals, and the scene of constant bustle and noise. On entering the house, there was nothing at first sight to remind one of the farm—a spacious hall, paved with black and white marble; at one extremity a very handsome drawing-room, and at the other a fine old staircase of black oak, polished till it was as slippery as ice, and having a chime-clock and a barrel-organ on its landing-places. But this drawing-room, a corresponding dining-parlour, and a handsome sleeping apartment upstairs, were all *tabooed* ground, and made use of on great and solemn occasions only—such as rent-days, and an occasional visit with which Mr. Tovell was honoured by a neighbouring peer. At all other times the family and their visitors lived entirely in the old-fashioned kitchen along with the servants. My great-uncle occupied an armchair, or, in attacks of gout, a couch on the side of a large open chimney. Mrs. Tovell sat at a small table, on which, in the evening, stood one small candle, in an iron candle stick, plying her needle by the feeble glimmer, surrounded by her maids, all busy at the same employment; but in winter a noble block of wood, sometimes the whole circumference of a pollard, threw its comfortable warmth and cheerful blaze over the apartment.

"At a very early hour in the morning, the alarum called the maids and their mistress also; and if the former were tardy, a louder alarum, and more formidable, was heard chiding the delay—not that scolding was peculiar to any occasion, it regularly ran on through all the day, like bells on harness, inspiriting the work, whether it were done ill or well. After the important business of the dairy, and a hasty breakfast, their respective employments were again resumed; that which the mistress took for her especial privilege being the scrubbing of the floors of the state apartments. A new servant, ignorant of her presumption, was found one

morning on her knees, hard at work on the floor of one of these preserves, and was thus addressed by her mistress:—'*You* wash such floors as these? Give me the brush this instant, and troop to the scullery and wash that, madam! . . . As true as G—d's in heaven, here comes Lord Rochford, to call on Mr. Tovell. Here, take my mantle (a blue woollen apron), and I'll go to the door!'

"If the sacred apartments had not been opened, the family dined on this wise:—the heads seated in the kitchen at an old table; the farm-men standing in the adjoining scullery, door open; the female servants at a side table, called a *bouter;* with the principals, at the table, perchance some travelling rat-catcher, or tinker, or farrier, or an occasional gardener in his shirt-sleeves, his face probably streaming with perspiration. My father well describes, in 'The Widow's Tale,' my mother's situation, when living in her younger days at Parham:

> 'But when the men beside their station took,
> The maidens with them, and with these the cook;
> When one huge wooden bowl before them stood,
> Fill'd with huge balls of farinaceous food;
> With bacon, mass saline! where never lean
> Beneath the brown and bristly rind was seen:
> When from a single horn the party drew
> Their copious draughts of heavy ale and new;
> When the coarse cloth she saw, with many a stain,
> Soil'd by rude hinds who cut and came again;
> She could not breathe, but, with a heavy sigh,
> Rein'd the fair neck, and shut the offended eye,
> She minced the sanguine flesh in frustums fine,
> And wondered much to see the *creatures* dine.'

"On ordinary days, when the dinner was over, the fire replenished, the kitchen sanded and lightly swept over in waves, mistress and maids, taking off their shoes, retired to their chambers for a nap of one hour to the

minute. The dogs and cats commenced their siesta by the fire. Mr. Tovell dozed in his chair, and no noise was heard, except the melancholy and monotonous cooing of a turtle-dove, varied, however, by the shrill treble of a canary. After the hour had expired, the active part of the family were on the alert, the bottles (Mr. Tovell's tea-equipage) placed on the table; and as if by instinct some old acquaintance would glide in for the evening's carousal, and then another, and another. If four or five arrived, the punchbowl was taken down, and emptied and filled again. But whoever came, it was comparatively a dull evening unless two especial Knights Companions were of the party:—one was a jolly old farmer, with much of the person and humour of Falstaff, a face as rosy as brandy could make it, and an eye teeming with subdued merriment; for he had the prime quality of a joker, superficial gravity:—the other was a relative of the family, a wealthy yeoman, middle-aged, thin, and muscular. . . . Such was the strength of his constitution, that, though he seldom went to bed sober, he retained a clear eye and stentorian voice to his eightieth year, and coursed when he was ninety. He sometimes rendered the colloquies over the bowl peculiarly piquant; and so soon as his voice began to be elevated, one or two of the inmates, my father and mother for example, withdrew with Mrs. Tovell into her own *sanctum sanctorum.*"

It was with these primitive folk that the author of "The Village" spent many weeks in the intervals of his duties at Muston; but at the time when he came to settle down at Parham John Tovell had seen his last sheaf harvested, and had himself been cut down by that tireless reaper whose scythe is ever swinging. He had appointed Crabbe one of his executors; and on arriving at the Old Hall the unfortunate poet found himself in a household so distracted by contention that it was only

with difficulty he could persuade the contending parties to "keep the peace." An ancient maiden lady, a sister of the deceased Mr. Tovell, used to boast that she could "screw Crabbe up and down like a fiddle"; but there was a point above which he refused to be "screwed," and she seems to have learnt in time to respect him. This, however, was not the case with the local topers who had been accustomed to resort so regularly to the Old Hall: they now found only a cool welcome, and soon began to say among themselves that "Parham had passed away, and the glory thereof." Indeed, during the four years that Crabbe lived at the Old Hall he saw little of the social side of life, and there was only one house in the neighbourhood at which he was a frequent visitor. This was Little Glemham Hall, the seat of Mr. Dudley North, who years before had granted Crabbe the loan of the five pounds he had asked for when he determined to leave Aldeburgh and try his fortune in London. At Dudley North's house he met such men as Earl Grey, Earl Lauderdale, Fox, and Roger Wilbraham; and it was there that Fox, when there was some hesitation as to who should pass first from the saloon to the dining-room, playfully pushed the poet in first, saying, "If he had his deserts, he would have walked before us all." And it was on the same occasion that Fox, after expressing disappointment that Crabbe's pen had been so long unemployed, promised to revise any poem he might prepare for publication—a promise the poet remembered when he had completed his "Parish Register."

About twelve months after his arrival at Parham, Crabbe was appointed curate of the neighbouring parish

of Sweffling, to which the curacy of Great Glemham was shortly afterwards added; but he continued to live at the Old Hall until the death of his third son so preyed on the health of Mrs. Crabbe that her husband became anxious to remove her from a place which now had for them both such sad associations. This he was enabled to do through the kindness of his good friend and patron Dudley North, who offered him Great Glemham Hall at a much reduced rent. Into this fine old house—which was pulled down in the early part of the last century—the Crabbes removed in October, 1796, and it continued to be their home for the next five years.

"The summer evenings especially, at this place," writes the Rev. G. Crabbe, the poet's son, "dwell in my memory like a delightful dream. When we had finished our lessons, if we did not adjourn with my father to the garden to work in our own plats, we generally took a family walk through the green lanes around Glemham; where, at every turn, stands a cottage or a farm, and not collected into a street, as in some parts of the kingdom, leaving the land naked and forlorn. Along these we wandered sometimes till the moon had risen, my mother leading a favourite little niece who lived with us, my father reading some novel aloud, while my brother and I caught moths and other insects to add to his collection. . . . When it was too dark to see, he would take a battledore and join us in the pursuit of the moths, or carry his little favourite if she were tired, and so we proceeded homeward, while on the right and left, before and behind, the nightingales (I never heard so many as among those woods) were pouring out their melody, sometimes three or four at once. And now we fill the margin of our hats with glowworms to place upon the lawn before our windows, and reach the house only in time for supper."

Crabbe, we are told, was a popular preacher while in Suffolk; and although it was his habit to read too quickly while at the desk, this was considered an error on the right side, for, as his son characteristically remarks, "The extremely slow enunciation of matter so very familiar is enough to make piety itself impatient." Some of his ways were rather strange, and he had no hesitation in addressing his congregation rather bluntly. On tithe-day he would say, as he stepped down from the pulpit, "I must have some money, gentlemen"; and on one or two occasions, when it grew dark before he had finished his sermon, he abruptly closed the manuscript with the remark, "Upon my word I cannot see; I must give you the rest when we meet again." Or, if determined to complete his discourse, he would walk into a pew near a window, stand on a seat, and finish reading the sermon there, "with the most admirable indifference to the remarks of his congregation."

During his residence at Great Glemham he commenced and completed several poems; but most of these, together with a treatise on botany and three novels at which he tried his hand, he burnt in manuscript. He began, however, "The Parish Register," which was published with some shorter pieces in 1807. But all this time, although well occupied in attending to the spiritual needs of his parishioners at Sweffling and Great Glemham, Crabbe was the non-resident incumbent of Muston, in Leicestershire, and Allington, in Lincolnshire; and after he had spent about five years at Great Glemham, Dr. Pretyman-Tomline, the Bishop of Lincoln, notwithstanding the pleading of Mr. Dudley North, decided that the "absentee" must return to the parishes



RENDHAM

WHERE CRABBE COMPLETED "THE PARISH REGISTER" AND WROTE PART OF "THE BOROUGH"

which had the prior claim to him. He was granted, however, a further four years' leave of absence, and in the autumn of 1801, when Great Glemham Hall was sold, he and his family went to reside at Rendham, a village about five miles from Framlingham. There he nearly completed "The Parish Register" and set to work upon "The Borough"; while he also wrote, during a visit to Muston, a poem of a very different kind to anything he had previously produced, *i.e.* "Sir Eustace Grey." This poem has unusual interest for admirers of Crabbe, seeing that, as the late Canon Ainger has pointed out, there is much in it which was evidently inspired by the dreams the writer had experienced in consequence of his having become addicted to the opium habit. It should be understood, however, that it was by the advice of a competent physician that Crabbe took the opiate, and it must not be imagined that he ever indulged in the habit to the extent Coleridge and De Quincey did. He seems to have always had the necessary strength of mind to refrain from excessive indulgence; though, as Edward FitzGerald remarks, in a manuscript note in his copy of the "Life of Crabbe," "It (the opium) probably influenced his dreams, for better or worse."

That Crabbe's imagination was influenced by his opium dreams was suggested to FitzGerald by a study of "Sir Eustace Grey" and "The World of Dreams." In the former poem, the scene of which is laid in a madhouse, Sir Eustace, in describing his imagined experiences after madness had come upon him, relates how "two fiends of darkness" took charge of him :

"At length a moment's sleep stole on,—
Again came my commission'd foes;
Again through sea and land we're gone,
No peace, no respite, no repose:
Above the dark broad sea we rose,
We ran through bleak and frozen land;
I had no strength their strength t' oppose,
An infant in a giant's hand.

"They placed me where those streamers play,
Those nimble beams of brilliant light;
It would the stoutest heart dismay,
To see, to feel, that dreadful sight:
So swift, so pure, so cold, so bright,
They pierced my frame with icy wound;
And all that half-year's polar night,
Those dancing streamers wrapp'd me round.

"Slowly that darkness pass'd away,
When down upon the earth I fell,—
Some hurried sleep was mine by day;
But, soon as toll'd the evening bell,
They forced me on, where ever dwell
Far distant men in cities fair,
Cities of whom no travellers tell,
Nor feet but mine were wanderers there.

"Their watchmen stare, and stand aghast,
As on we hurry through the dark;
The watch-light blinks as we go past,
The watch-dog shrinks and fears to bark;
The watch-tower's bell sounds shrill; and, hark!
The free wind blows—we've left the town—
A wide sepulchral ground I mark,
And on a tombstone place me down."

In these, and several other verses of "Sir Eustace Grey," it is hard to recognize the hand which wrote "The Library" and "The Village"; and when we turn to "The World of Dreams" we are confronted by sprites

and spectres such as have no place in the "mean streets" of "The Borough" or in the pages of "The Parish Register":

"I know not how, but I am brought
Into a large and Gothic hall,
Seated with those I never sought—
Kings, Caliphs, Kaisers,—silent all;
Pale as the dead; enrobed and tall,
Majestic, frozen, solemn, still;
They wake my fears, my wits appal,
And with both scorn and terror fill.

* * * * *

"They're gone!—and in their room I see
A fairy being, form and dress
Brilliant as light; nor can there be
On earth that heavenly loveliness;
Nor words can that sweet look express,
Or tell what living gems adorn
That wondrous beauty: who can guess
Where such celestial charms were born?

"Yet, as I wonder and admire,
The grace is gone, the glory dead;
And now it is but mean attire
Upon a shrivel'd beldame spread."

Comparing "Sir Eustace Grey" with the work of De Quincey, Canon Ainger remarks that "The morbid inspiration is clearly the same in both cases, and there can be little doubt that Crabbe's poem owes its inception to opium, and that the framework was devised by him for the utilization of his dreams."

The last four years of Crabbe's life in Suffolk were spent very quietly. The greater part of the time he was at Rendham; but occasionally he visited Muston and Aldeburgh. He returned to his charge at the former place in October, 1805, and only once again did he

re-visit these Suffolk scenes amid which the happiest years of his life were passed. This was shortly after the death of his wife, and when he was slowly recovering from a severe illness which it was feared would prove fatal. He then, while recruiting his health at Aldeburgh, devoted one day to a solitary ramble around Parham and through the Glemham woods, where he was everywhere reminded of those long-gone days when he had often trudged over to Parham to exchange vows of undying affection with his "Mira." On this occasion it was night before he returned to Aldeburgh; and after his death his son found in his note-book the following lines, which he had apparently composed during that solitary walk:

"Yes, I behold again the place,
The seat of joy, the source of pain;
It brings in view the form, the face
That I must never see again.

"The night-bird's song that sweetly floats
On this soft gloom—this balmy air,
Brings to the mind her sweeter notes
That I again must never hear.

"Lo! yonder shines that window's light,
My guide, my token, heretofore;
And now again it shines as bright,
When those dear eyes can shine no more.

"Then hurry from this place away!
It gives not now the bliss it gave;
For Death has made its charm his prey,
And joy is buried in her grave."

CHAPTER VI

EAST DEREHAM

George Borrow's birthplace—Borrow's opinion of Dereham—Dumpling Green—The Perfrements—Ann Perfrement—The Wake of Freya—Sergeant-Major Borrow—Marries Ann Perfrement—Birth of George Borrow—Lady Eleanor Fenn—James Philo—Cowper—His life at Dereham—At Mundesley—Dr. Johnson—Dunham Lodge—Miss Perowne—Death of Mrs. Unwin—"The Castaway"—Death of Cowper—His tomb in Dereham Church—Mrs. Browning's tribute to Cowper—Mattishall—William Bodham Donne—FitzGerald at Mattishall—"The Paston Letters"—Horace Walpole's opinion of them—Sir John Fenn.

"ON an evening of July, in the year 18—, at East D——, a beautiful little town in a certain district of East Anglia, I first saw the light."

With these words, George Borrow, who was always averse to stating his age, and generally gave it incorrectly, opened the first chapter of his "Lavengro," written when East Dereham had become only a memory to him, and he was settled down in his lonely little house beside Oulton Broad. East Dereham is, indeed, a pleasant place, and it is pardonable if Borrow, looking back at it through the golden haze which often softens the hard outlines of half-forgotten scenes, considered it "beautiful," though a stranger is hardly so impressed by its beauty as by the quiet of its streets and the peaceful charm of

its surroundings. But just as most of us who have been born amid country scenes can usually find more in them than others can, so Borrow, after wandering among ancient towns and cities, and through some of the wildest and most impressive scenery of Europe, thought of the apple and cherry blossom in the Dereham orchards and the mayblossom of the high hedges bordering the Dereham lanes, and called the town "beautiful." And one is not inclined to quarrel with him about it, especially on a bright May day, when the sunlight falls warmly on what are left of the old red roofs of Dereham, cuckoo-flowers are waving their lilac blossoms in the meadows beside "the brook Tud," and thrushes are singing in almost every garden in and around the town. One is rather disposed to be as favourably impressed with the place as those early pilgrims must have been when, after long and toilsome journeying, they came here to kneel before St. Withburga's shrine. But apart from its church and what are (very improbably) said to be the remains of the tomb of St. Withburga, there is as little in Dereham for those that "love everything that's old" to be attracted by as there is of that which is strikingly beautiful to captivate the simple seeker after what is lovely and picturesque. It is for its associations rather than anything else that it is interesting; little else, I feel convinced, would tempt a stranger to loiter in Dereham or seek an intimate acquaintance with a locality bearing the euphonious name of Dumpling Green. Yet, to Dumpling Green we must go to find the house in which Borrow—no matter how much he might try to conceal the fact—was born in the year 1803.

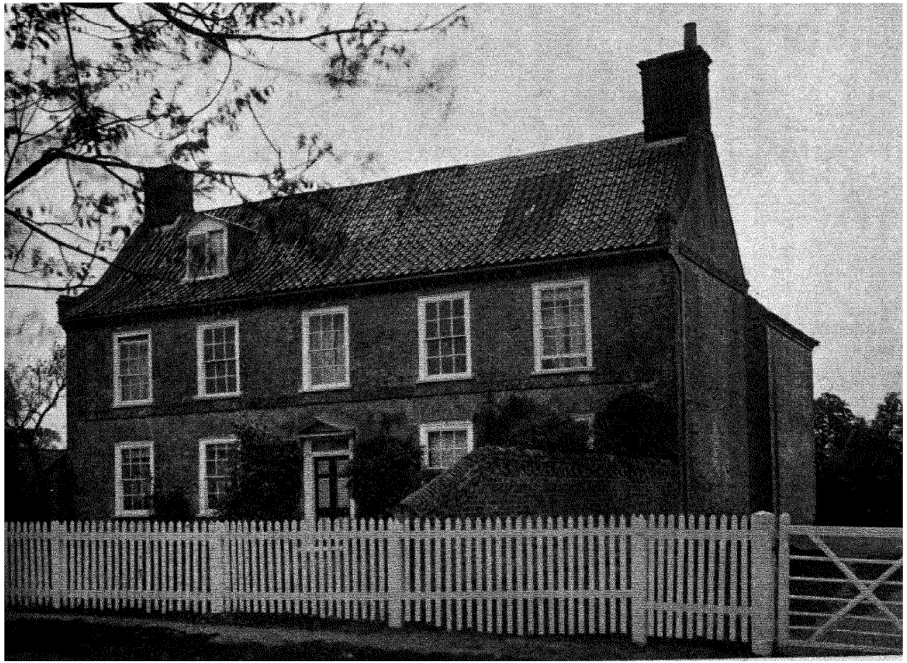
To reach the so-called Green, after arriving at the

railway station, one must turn down the narrow Commercial Road, which branches off on the left from the Station Road, and follow it, after it has become the Yaxham Road, until there is seen on the right a small thatched alehouse called the Jolly Farmers. Immediately opposite this alehouse is a lane running at right angles with the road, and this is Dumpling Green; though to-day it bears no resemblance to the open greens on which our villagers were wont to disport themselves during rustic festivals in the days when England was "merrie England." It is, in fact, a narrow lane, bordered for the most part by high hedges of hawthorn, wild rose, and bramble, but with here and there an ancient cottage or small farmhouse with orchard and garden, giving some relief to the sameness of its midday twilight of shade. Nearly half a mile down this lane there is, on the right, a pond, or, as it is locally called, a "pit," quite big enough for a child in quest of tadpoles to tumble into; and just beyond it, on the opposite side of the lane, is the house in which, on the evening of July 5th, 1803, George Henry Borrow first made the acquaintance of a world which, notwithstanding the considerable experience he had of it, seems never to have been quite good enough for him, though he often had a good word to say for parts of it.

It is a small plain-fronted, two-storied house with attics, of substantial appearance, built of red brick, but showing signs of having at some time received one or more coatings of white or drab paint or wash. The front door is approached through a tiny garden containing a few straggling rose-bushes, and opens into a little entrance hall or lobby, from which the main

staircase ascends opposite the door, under a kind of arch, on each side of which is a curious little sliding door or ventilator. The rooms on either side of the entrance are of fair size and quite uninteresting, but the kitchen, which is reached by a passage, has a wide, open, old-fashioned hearth, beside which Borrow, as a babe, must often have lain on his mother's knees. At the back of the house are the usual farm outbuildings. On the right is an orchard, from which most of the trees are gone ; and behind it and the farm buildings are meadows and fields. So far as can be judged from their appearance, neither the house nor the country surrounding it has undergone any alteration since Farmer Samuel Perfrement entered into occupation of the farm over a century ago.

The Perfrements, as Borrow tells us, and their name implies, were of French Protestant descent, the grandfather of Samuel having migrated from France soon after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He was probably one of the less-well-to-do emigrants from that country ; for there is no record of his ever having become a landowner, nor of his son or grandson ever having been proprietor of a farm. Samuel Perfrement probably married a daughter of some other farmer in the neighbourhood in which he settled, and by her he had eight children, his third child and second daughter being Ann, who was born in January, 1772, and became the wife of Captain Thomas Borrow. Of the childhood of Ann we know little, but the little we know is interesting because it helps us to realize the atmosphere of superstition in which the less educated country folk lived at the end of the eighteenth century. Her elder



GEORGE BORROW'S BIRTHPLACE, EAST DEREHAM

sister Elizabeth, when sixteen years old, practised one night an ancient superstitious ceremony of Norse origin known as the "Wake of Freya," the belief being that if a young maiden should wash her linen white in running water and watch it drying before the fire from eleven till twelve at night, the goddess Freya would, on the stroke of midnight, show her the face of the man she would marry. Elizabeth, it seems, although so young, had had the misfortune to be jilted by a professed lover, and, being much afraid that she would never win a husband, she determined to set her mind at rest one way or another by performing the mystic rite. Accordingly, on a bitter cold night, she hung before the fire a garment she had washed in a pool beneath an old oak near the house—the pool and oak can still be seen —and having set the door open, as the rite required, sat with her sister Ann, shivering with cold and fright, waiting for "something to happen." At last the hour of midnight struck, and before the third stroke had sounded the quaking sisters heard the garden gate slam. "Before I could recover myself," stated Mrs. Borrow, several years afterwards, "my sister had sprung to the door and both locked and bolted it. The next moment she was in convulsions. I scarcely know what happened; and yet it appeared to me for a moment that something pressed against the door with a low moaning sound." The result of it all was, to quote again her own words: "Why, my sister was ill for many weeks. Poor thing, she never throve, married poorly, flung herself away."

With Ann the fates dealt more kindly. When she was twenty years of age she was permitted to play a

minor part in her native town with a company of actors sent on tour by the Norwich Theatre, and among those who witnessed her small performance on the Dereham stage was Sergeant-Major Borrow of the West Norfolk Militia, which had its headquarters in the town. This Thomas Borrow was a Cornishman by birth, who, after serving in the Cornish Yeomanry Militia, had enlisted into the Coldstream Guards, worked his way up from private to Sergeant, and, in 1792, had been appointed drill-instructor and recruiting officer of the local militia. On being attracted by the charms of the fair Ann Perfrement, he took the first opportunity to make her acquaintance; and, believing perhaps that there was truth in the local saying, "Happy the wooing that's not long a-doing," he married her in February, 1793, rather less than a year after his first appearance in Dereham. The marriage took place at the parish church, the witnesses who signed the register being the bride's superstitious sister Elizabeth and the parish clerk. Two years after his marriage, Thomas Borrow was appointed quarter-master of the West Norfolk Militia, and three years later he was promoted to the adjutancy of the same regiment, a promotion carrying with it captain's rank.

For about ten years subsequent to his marriage Captain Borrow was moving from place to place with his regiment, and during that time a son, John, was born to him, probably at Chelmsford or Colchester. But in 1802 the W. N. M. returned to Dereham, and were dispersed for a while, to be re-embodied in the following year, during which the Captain's second son, George, was born, and within a month of his birth

commenced his travels with the regiment. Six years later the Borrows were here again, and also during portions of the two ensuing years; and it was then that young George received such impressions of his native town as he has given us in "Lavengro."

"I have already said," he writes, "that it was a beautiful little town—at least it was at the time of which I am speaking; what it is at present I know not, for thirty years or more have elapsed since I last trod its streets. It will scarcely have improved, for how could it be better than it then was? I love to think on thee, pretty, quiet D——, thou pattern of an old English country town, with thy clean but narrow streets branching out from thy modest market-place, with thine old-fashioned houses, with here and there a roof of venerable thatch, with thy one half-aristocratic mansion, where resided thy Lady Bountiful—she, the generous and kind, who loved to visit the sick, leaning on her gold-headed cane, whilst the sleek footman walked at a respectful distance behind."

And further on in the same chapter he tells us that—

"Twice every Sunday I was regularly taken to the church, where, from a corner of the spacious pew, lined with black leather, I would fix my eyes on the dignified high-church rector, and the dignified high-church clerk, and watch the movement of their lips, from which, as they read their respective portions of the venerable liturgy, would roll many a portentous word descriptive of the wondrous works of the Most High."

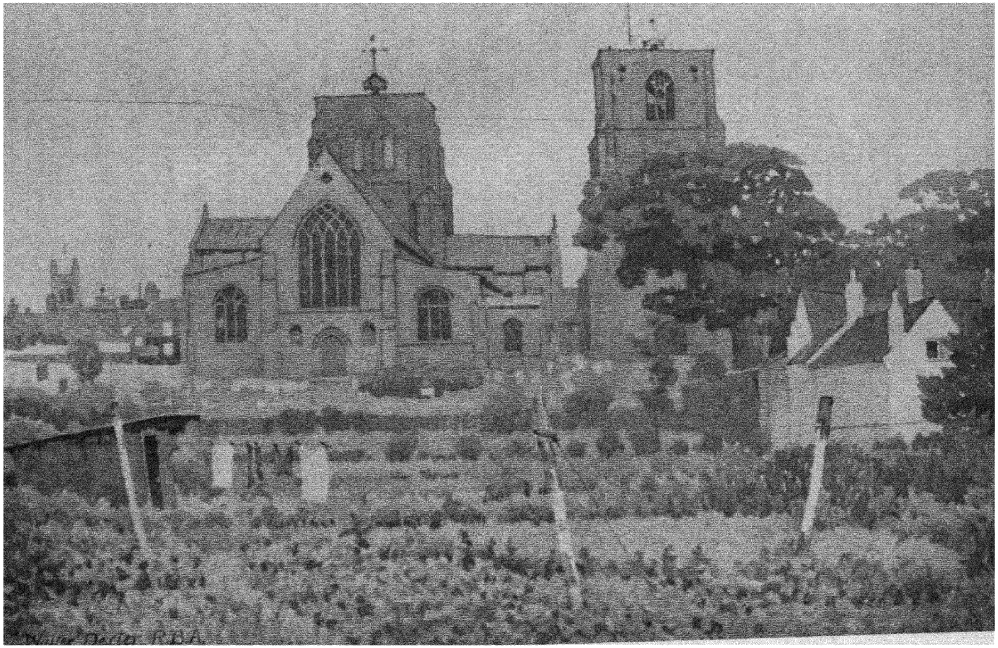
Borrow's "Lady Bountiful" has been identified with Lady Eleanor Fenn, the wife of Sir John Fenn, who was the first editor of the famous "Paston Letters." For nearly fifty years Lady Fenn lived in Dereham, where

she founded a Sunday school and, as Dr. Knapp tells us, "wrote comfortable volumes for the young under the *noms de plume* of Mrs. Teachwell and Mrs. Love-child." As for the "dignified high-church rector," he was the Rev. Charles Hyde Wollaston; while the clerk whom Borrow has immortalised was James Philo or Philoh, an old soldier whose grave may be seen in the churchyard.

"I have heard say that he blew a fife . . . a bold fife, to cheer the Guards and the brave Marines as they marched with measured step, obeying an insane command, up Bunker's height, whilst the rifles of the sturdy Yankees were sending the leaden hail sharp and thick amidst the red-coated ranks; for Philoh had not always been a man of peace, nor an exhorter to turn the other cheek to the smiter, but had even arrived at the dignity of a halberd in his country's service before his six-foot form required rest, and the gray-haired veteran retired, after a long peregrination, to his native town."

Apart from his recollections of this ancient worthy, his rector, and the Lady Bountiful, Borrow has left us no reminiscences of his childhood in Dereham, save that in 1811 he stood one evening in the market-place and gazed at a comet which "had a tail like that of a kite."

So, as we shall meet with George Borrow amid other scenes, we turn towards the fine old church to which he was taken as a child, and, after glancing at its massive detached bell-tower, which was used as a prison for French prisoners of war on their way from Yarmouth to Norman Cross; at the grave of the young Frenchman, Jean de Narde, who was shot whilst



EAST [illegible]REHAM CHURCH

WHERE THE POET COWPER IS BURIED

attempting to escape from the tower; and at the supposed relics of the tomb of St. Withburga; pass through the porch and into the north transept, where lie the mortal remains of him whom Borrow calls "England's best and sweetest bard."

The story of Cowper's connection with Dereham is far from being cheerful reading; for ere he came here the dark cloud of despair had overshadowed him, and during the few years that elapsed between his arrival here and his death there were very few days when his unhinged mind permitted him to find any pleasure in life. It was in July, 1795, about a year after the King had allowed him a pension for life, that, accompanied by his invalid friend, Mrs. Unwin, he was removed from Weston to North Tuddenham, near Dereham, where the rectory was prepared for his accommodation until his friends were able to remove him to Mundesley, on the Norfolk coast. When the idea of his removal was first mooted, Lady Hesketh said that he loved Norfolk, and ardently wished to see it again before he died; but that he started for North Tuddenham in a most despondent mood, and with a presentiment that he would never see Weston again, is evident from his having written on a shutter of his Weston bedroom—

> "Farewell, dear scenes, for ever closed to me;
> Oh! for what sorrows must I now exchange ye!"

At Mundesley he occupied a house from the windows of which he could look out on the sea, and every effort was made to prevent his brooding over his troubles; but he had not been there many days when he wrote to

Lady Hesketh that he was as "hopeless as ever"; that, "the most forlorn of beings," he trod the shore "under the burden of infinite despair." He compared himself with a solitary pillar of rock which the crumbling cliff had left at the high-water mark. "Torn from my natural connections, I stand alone and expect the storm that shall displace me." One day his relative, the Rev. Dr. Johnson, persuaded him to walk to Happisburgh and back after dinner, a distance of about fourteen miles.

"Poor Soul," wrote Dr. Johnson, a day or two later, "he said he never walked so far in his life but once—and besides he carried an umbrella to keep the wind from his eyes, which laid full in our faces, and made it quite hard work for him to get along with his sail spread."

He himself said that he was "almost ready to sink with fatigue long before we reached the place of our destination," and added that the walk had brought on a fever he would perhaps never get rid of. Writing again in the following month, he expressed his conviction that he would never see Weston again.

"I have been tossed like a ball into a far country, from which there is no rebound for me. There indeed I lived a life of infinite despair, and such is my life in Norfolk. Such indeed it would be in any given spot upon the face of the globe."

In the autumn of the same year Cowper was brought to Dereham, where Dr. Johnson had a house in the market-place. But before the end of the year another move was made to Dunham Lodge, a house standing

in a pleasant park about nine miles from Dereham. Here, says Taylor, one of his biographers, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin were constantly attended by—

"two of the most interesting females that could possibly have been selected, Miss Johnson and Miss Perowne. The latter took so lively an interest in Cowper's welfare, and exerted so much ingenuity in attempting to produce some alleviation of his sufferings, that he ever afterwards honoured her with his peculiar regard, and preferred her attendance to that of every other individual by whom he was surrounded; and she continued her kind attention to him to the close of his life."

Cowper's depression, however, underwent little abatement, and in June, 1796, Dr. Johnson hit upon a plan which for a time caused him to take some interest in life and literary matters. There had just been published a new edition of Pope's "Homer," and it occurred to Dr. Johnson that this work might excite the poet's interest sufficiently to rouse him from his dejection. He therefore sent for a copy of the book, and placed it where Cowper was bound to see it, at the same time remarking that it contained some comparisons of Pope with Cowper. The plan succeeded so well that next day Cowper was discovered not only to have found the passages referred to, but to have corrected his own translation. He then became regularly engaged in revising his own version, and for some weeks produced nearly sixty lines a day; but after a few weeks he again lapsed into hopeless depression, and towards the end of October, 1796, it was thought desirable to remove him to Mundesley and afterwards to Dereham for the winter. During that winter his dear friend,

Mrs. Unwin, died. For a long time he had been accustomed to sit with her for a short time every day, and he did so on the day before her death; but so far as his friends could discern he was so absorbed in his own mental anguish as to be unconscious of the seriousness of her condition. On the following morning, however, his first question to the servant who opened the shutters of his room was, "Is there life above stairs?" He saw Mrs. Unwin an hour before her death, when "one exclamation of passionate sorrow escaped him"; afterwards, he never mentioned her name.

Dr. Johnson's efforts to impart some cheerfulness to his despondent kinsman were unceasing, and at times he succeeded in getting him to take some interest in reading and composing. He never lost an opportunity to direct his attention to his "Homer," which he eventually completed. While at Dereham he composed a few original poems, among them being "Montes Glaciales," founded on an incident he had heard read from a Norwich paper, but to which at the time he had appeared to pay no heed. His last original poem, "The Castaway," was founded on an incident related in Anson's "Voyage" of a mariner who was washed overboard in the Atlantic and drowned. Its two concluding verses are—

"I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

"No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone,
When snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd by deeper gulfs than he."

Commenting on this poem, Professor Goldwin Smith says that—

"The despair which finds vent in verse is hardly despair. Poetry can never be the direct expression of emotion; it must be the product of reflection combined with an exercise of the faculty of composition which in itself is pleasant. Still 'The Castaway' ought to be an antidote to religious depression, since it is the work of a man of whom it would be an absurdity to think as really estranged from the spirit of good, who had himself done good to the utmost of his powers."

But his Dereham days were dreary enough, and although Dr. Johnson occasionally took him to Mundesley, even the upsetting of the chaise in which he made the journey failed to disturb his mental preoccupation; at any rate, we are told, he "discovered no particular alarm." Several works of fiction were read to him, in which he took some interest; and when his own works were read to him, they seemed to interest him until the reader arrived at "John Gilpin," when he begged him to desist.

The final break-up of his health began towards the close of 1799; but he lingered on until the 25th April of the following year. On the night before his death some refreshment was offered to him by his devoted attendant, Miss Perowne, but he rejected it with the last words he was heard to utter, "What can it signify?"

"Peace to the unhappy one, he is gone to his rest," wrote Borrow many years after; "the death-like face is no longer occasionally seen timidly and mournfully looking for a moment through the window-pane upon thy market-place, quiet and pretty D——; the hind in thy neighbourhood no longer at evening-fall views, and starts as he views, the dark, lathy figure moving beneath the hazels and alders of shadowy lanes, or by the side of murmuring trout streams; and no longer at early dawn does the sexton of the old church reverently doff his hat as, supported by some kind friend, the death-stricken creature totters along the church path to that mouldering edifice with the low roof, inclosing a spring of sanatory waters, built and devoted to some saint—if the legend over the door be true, by the daughter of an East Anglian king."

He was buried under the north window of the north transept of Dereham Church, where his simple monument is inscribed with lines by his friend Hayley, which, as Professor Goldwin Smith remarks, "if not good poetry," are "a tribute of sincere affection."

> "Ye, who in warmth the public triumph feel
> Of talents, dignified by sacred zeal,
> Here to devotion's bard, devoutly just,
> Pay your fond tribute due to Cowper's dust.
> England, exulting in his spotless fame,
> Ranks with her dearest sons his fav'rite name.
> Sense, fancy, wit, suffice not all to raise
> So dear a title to affection's praise.
> His highest honours to the heart belong;
> His virtues formed the magic of his song."

The monument, which was erected at the cost of Lady Hesketh, also has attached to it tablets to the memory of Mrs. Unwin and Miss Perowne, his "best and dearest

friends." Above the tomb is a memorial window, in one of the central lights of which is a figure of the poet. But his own works are his best memorial, and perhaps the finest tribute paid to his memory is that of Mrs. Browning—

"O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless singing;
O Christians, at your cross of hope, a hopeless hand was clinging;
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye were smiling!

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears his story,
How discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted.

* * * * * * *

"And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences.
The pulse of dew upon the grass, kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber."

The other Dereham memorial of Cowper is a chapel adjoining the market-place. In front of it is an inscription by the late Dean Stanley, appended to which are some familiar and pathetic lines from "The Task" commencing—

"I was the stricken deer that left the herd."

With the names of Cowper and Borrow associated with it, East Dereham must needs have an interest for us there is little in itself to awaken; but when one has seen Borrow's birthplace and stood beside Cowper's

tomb, he may wish to see something more of the scenes amid which the one spent part of his childhood and the other his declining years. So, if he have time to spare, he can hardly do better than ramble westward through those scenes of "Arcady" which have been so faithfully and delightfully described by the Rev. Canon Jessopp; or eastward, to Yaxham, where Cowper's kinsman and friend is buried; and to Mattishall, where Edward FitzGerald was sometimes the guest of his friend William Bodham Donne. These are quiet places where traditions live longer than amid more stirring scenes, and, as they have undergone little change within the memory of living men, one may perhaps receive impressions among them which will help to revive the fading features of the past.

William Bodham Donne, the literary critic and Licenser of Plays, was born at Mattishall in 1807. He was the friend and frequent correspondent of several distinguished men, and in treating of the literary associations of Bury St. Edmunds—where he lived for some years—I shall have occasion to refer to him at some length. On leaving Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, he returned to Mattishall and devoted himself to the study of English literature, and especially of the drama, among his own first literary productions being a fine essay on Sir Thomas Browne, which appeared in the "Athenæum" in 1829. He did not, however, give himself up seriously to literary work until after his marriage with a niece of Cowper's kinsman, Dr. Johnson. FitzGerald, who had been one of his boy-friends at the famous Bury Grammar School, visited him at his Mattishall home towards the end of

1836. Writing soon after to Richard Trench, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, Donne says—

"His (FitzGerald's) life and conversation are the most perfectly philosophic of any I know. They approach in grand quiescence to some of the marvels of contentment in Plutarch. He is Diogenes without his dirt. He confesses to so much ease, as to make it a question whether since he cannot find, he should not create for himself some salutary trouble, and consults me if he should marry, or open a Banker's Book. I advise him, however, to let well alone."

This was the first of several visits paid by FitzGerald to Mattishall, where, as Mrs. Catherine B. Johnson tells us, no one "was more welcome . . . and the children loved him (the 'Goths and Vandals,' as he called them)." On one occasion, when he was speculating about settling down in some country-town for the winter, Donne recommended Dereham to him—

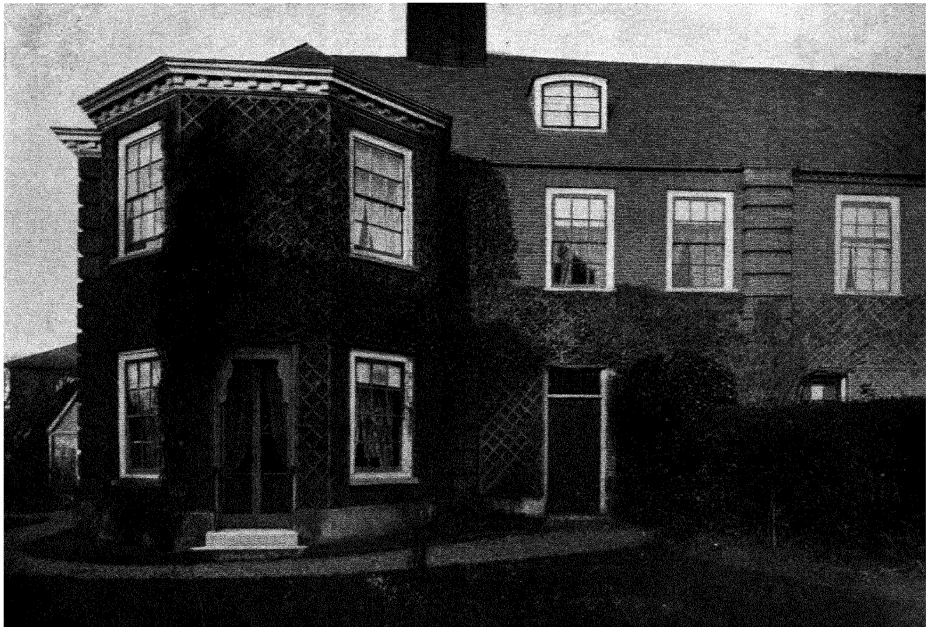
"because Dereham contains no one of the elements of his comfort and, had he been in earnest, would have most speedily put his project to flight. Dereham," adds Donne, "is peopled with Capulets and Montagues who quarrel on every decent occasion—such as coals, schools, gravel-pits, Friendly Societies, Odd Fellows, newspapers, churchwardens, etc., and would have managed to draw our even-minded friend into some quarrel, or would have united, to squabble with him."

About ten years before the Donnes removed to Bury, their Mattishall house was occupied for a while by Sir William Parry, the Arctic explorer—"the friend and crony of both 'the Bears,' greater and less," Donne called him, "the great hyperborean, Knight of the North Pole."

Before taking final leave of Dereham, there is one other house to be glanced at which deserves at least a passing mention. It is known as Hill House, and stands in the north-east corner of the Market Place, at the junction of Theatre Street and Wellington Road. About a hundred and twenty years ago there was given to the world by John Fenn, an almost unknown Norfolk antiquary then living in this old house, a selection from a remarkable series of letters. They appeared in two volumes under the title of "Original Letters written during the Reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III., by Various Persons of Rank and Consequence," and their appearance excited a great deal of interest. In about a week the whole of the first edition was disposed of, and for some time little else was talked of in the literary world. Horace Walpole, whose opinion on such subjects carried more weight than that of any of his contemporaries, wrote—

"The letters of Henry VI.'s reign, etc., are come out, and *to me* make all other letters not worth reading. I have gone through one volume, and cannot bear to be writing when I am so eager to be reading. . . . There are letters from *all* my acquaintance, Lord Rivers, Lord Hastings, the Earl of Warwick, whom I remember still better than Mrs. Strawbridge, though she died within these fifty years. What antiquary would be answering a letter from a living countess, when he may read one from Eleanor Mowbray, Duchess of Norfolk?"

The two volumes were dedicated to King George III., who soon sent for, and was presented with, the original letters; and, in acknowledgment of the gift, John Fenn, who had prepared them for publication, was



HILL HOUSE, EAST DEREHAM

WHERE SIR JOHN FENN EDITED THE "PASTON LETTERS"

knighted. More letters from the wonderful collection were loudly called for, and two years later two further volumes were issued, covering the period already dealt with in the first volumes and containing further correspondence dating down to the middle of the reign of Edward IV. Subsequently, after the death of Sir John Fenn, a fifth volume was issued by his nephew, Mr. Serjeant Frere, and the public was in possession of the greater part of the famous Paston Letters. Since then a new edition, containing upwards of four hundred hitherto unpublished letters, has been carefully edited by Mr. James Gairdner—an edition which must prove to be a lasting monument to its compiler and an invaluable possession to future historians and students of life in England during the latter part of the period of the House of Lancaster and the early years of the Tudor period.

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CHAPTER VII

NORWICH

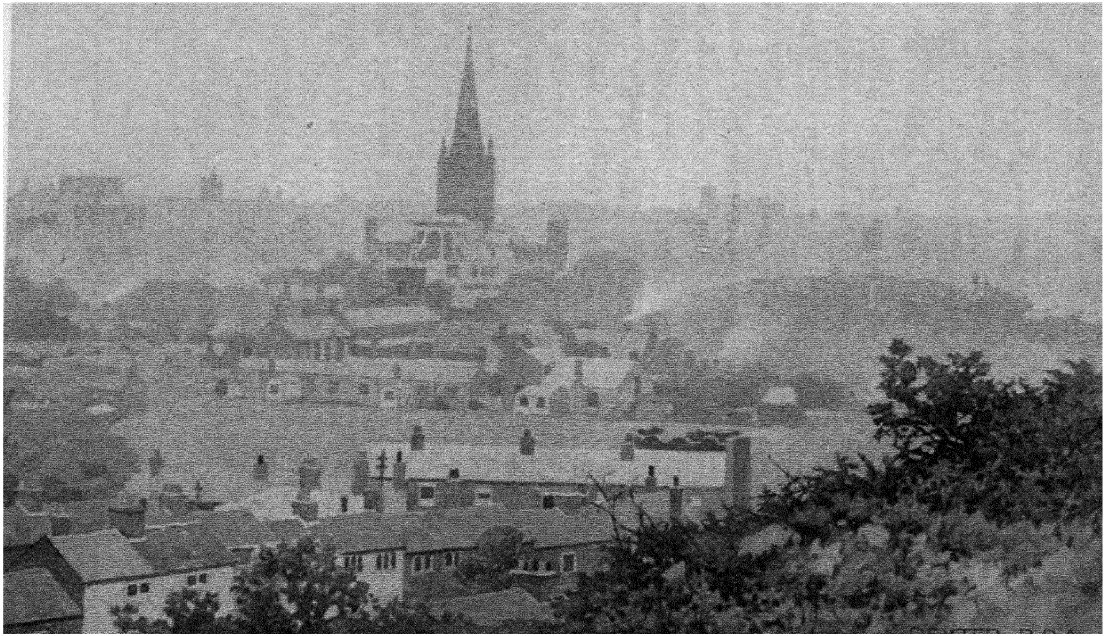
The literary life of Norwich—Its worthies and celebrities—William Taylor—Dr. Frank Sayers—The Austins—Joseph John Gurney—Elizabeth Fry—Lady Eastlake—Amelia Opie—Becomes a Quaker — Her "passion for prisms" — The Stanfield Hall murder — Death of Mrs. Opie — Harriet Martineau and Mrs. Opie—The Martineaus—Harriet Martineau's "Autobiography" —Her childhood—Polidori—William Taylor—George Borrow—Borrow's Court, Willow Lane—Borrow at Norwich Grammar School—Contemporary scholars—Borrow runs away—Is brought back again — A painful sequel — Frances Power Cobbe's and Dr. Martineau's recollections of Borrow—Thomas D'Eterville—Borrow as a "sportsman"—Borrow and the gipsies—Norwich Castle Hill—Jasper Petulengro—Mousehold Heath—The "wind on the heath"—Borrow and William Taylor—Borrow's knowledge of languages—The "Athens of England"—Borrow a lawyer's clerk—His earliest literary efforts—Death of his father—He decides to go to London—Leaves Norwich—The "veiled period" —Borrow on Norwich—A chastened Borrow—The Norwich School of Artists—"Old" Crome.

A DISTINGUISHED literary critic has expressed regret that no attempt has been made to reconstruct the literary life of Norwich during the earlier half of the nineteenth century. That no one has ventured upon the task is not, perhaps, surprising; for whoever thought of doing so would find that the half century in question could scarcely be satisfactorily dealt with

apart from the one preceding it, when influences were at work in the old city which undoubtedly had much to do with the subsequent remarkable development of local intellectual life; while the initial effort of attaining even a perfunctory acquaintance with the immense mass of more or less literary work produced within the walls of Norwich, or by writers intimately connected with the city, would be so great and wearisome that only a writer possessing almost superhuman patience would be undaunted by the magnitude of his undertaking. Indeed, it is not unlikely that at the outset he would come to the conclusion that his time might be better occupied; for a consideration of the claims advanced by the various writers with whom he would have to deal would convince him that, however great an influence they had in their day, they produced little of permanent interest, and readers to-day care little about them or their works. Why this should be so is partly explained by Mrs. Herbert Jones in her interesting article on some of the "Worthies of Norwich," where she states that "the literary workers (of this period) . . . dealt, for the most part, with their present—moral, intellectual, or visible;" for, although the intellectual life of any period must always be interesting, the presentment of it by a country town coterie could scarcely avoid being prejudiced by provincialism. Indeed, if the opinion of a reader who has simply "dipped" into some of the many and voluminous biographies of those forgotten, or almost forgotten worthies may be set down here, it is that their largely-quoted letters are as dreary reading as the "events" which occupied much of their time and attention are unexciting; and if it were not for one

rather spiteful autobiography and a more famous work which is largely autobiographical, we should have preserved to us few facts of the lives of these provincial "intellectuals" which are really entertaining or enlivening.

Yet no one can deny that the hundred years embraced by the latter half of the eighteenth century and the earlier half of the nineteenth are the years in the history of the old city of which it has best reason to be proud; for certainly no English city of its size ever before had dwelling within its walls during any one century of its existence so many men and women whose names were so prominently before the public of their day. Almost every branch of literature—historical and romantic, theological and philosophical, biographical and editorial, critical and commentatory, moral, social, and political—was represented; and contemporary with writers engaged in these directions were others distinguished as translators, physicians, antiquaries, and naturalists. Conspicuous among them, by reason of his peculiarities as well as his remarkable attainments, was William Taylor, whose period of prominence began in 1790, when he made his translation of Burger's "Lenore." Contemporary with him was Dr. Frank Sayers, who had been his schoolfellow at Mrs. Barbauld's famous little school at Palgrave, and who was a student of continental literature, chiefly of Scandinavian and Danish poetry and mythology. "Dr. Sayers," writes Harriet Martineau in comparing him with Taylor, "*was* a scholar" of whom Norwich might well be proud; and it was his deep knowledge and cultured mind which attracted to his house in the quiet Close the poet Southey, Sir James



NORWICH, FROM MOUSEHOLD HEATH

Mackintosh, and other famous men of letters. Towards the close of the eighteenth century the death of Dr. William Enfield, the theological and philosophical writer, removed a prominent figure from local literary society.

The names of Dr. Edward Rigby,[1] the friend of "Coke of Norfolk," and a learned writer on subjects as diverse as medicine and farming; of Thomas Amyot, who edited Windham's speeches, but was chiefly engaged in applying archæological methods to the study of history; and of Seth William Stevenson, antiquary, editor, and biographer, are wellnigh forgotten outside the city with which they were intimately connected; and that of Henry Reeve, who was the son of a famous Norwich physician, is probably better known as that of a friend of Carlyle and Thackeray than of a writer whose death, as recently as 1895, terminated a brilliant literary and journalistic career. Nor do the associations with Norwich of John Austin, the celebrated jurist and friend of J. Stuart Mill; of his wife Sarah Austin, who was the daughter of a Norwich yarn-maker, and who was as handsome as she was gifted; or of Charles Austin, who was for a time a doctor's assistant in the city, possess much interest for us to-day. As for Joseph John Gurney, the brother of the more famous Elizabeth Fry, his memory is still cherished as that of a great philanthropist, and the list of his religious works is not the briefest in the

[1] Dr. Rigby, who died in 1821, is buried at Framingham Earl, near Norwich, where, in allusion to his planting of trees, there is inscribed on his tombstone—

> "A monument to Rigby do you seek?
> On every side the whispering woodlands speak."

"Dictionary of National Biography;" but the glimpse we get of him in "Lavengro" brings before us a more attractive personality than does Braithwaite's lengthy biography. Lady Eastlake, who was a daughter of Dr. Edward Rigby, is well remembered by those who had the privilege of her acquaintance; but she was not so well known in Norwich as in London and Edinburgh, where she was a conspicuous figure in society for many years.

The writer of a history of English literature which still finds acceptance as a student's manual, tells us that Amelia Opie's first novel, published in 1801, may even now be read with interest; and thanks partly to her biographer, but more perhaps to Harriet Martineau's obituary notice of her, her personality still has some appeal for us. In spite of the opinion of the writer I have just quoted, it is hardly doubtful that no one reads her stories now; and this, notwithstanding that they received the praise of such men as Southey and Sir Walter Scott, the latter of whom confessed to her that her "Father and Daughter" was a book "he had cried over more than he ever cried over such things;" but the sudden transformation of a lady who, we are told, "dearly loved excitement" into a sober Quakeress is a sufficiently rare event to cause her to be remembered, especially in a city which was once a Quaker stronghold, and where most of the transformations in which Quakers have been concerned have been, quietly, in other directions. But Amelia Opie, although she became a Quaker, always had leanings towards the harmless pleasures of her unregenerate days. Evidence of this is found in her love of bright colours. She had a "passion for prisms,"

several of which were set in a frame, mounted like a pole-screen, and kept constantly in the room in which she sat. "Oh! the exquisite beauty of the prisms on my ceiling just now," she wrote to a friend; "it is a pleasure to exist only to look at it. I think that green parrots and macaws, flying about in their native woods, must look like that." Also, Mrs. Brightwell informs us, she "luxuriated" in flowers, the most luscious scents of which were "not too strong for her nerves." "Light, heat, and fragrance were three indispensables for her." Far more remarkable was her regular habit of attending the assize trials, which had a great fascination for her; and although she drew the line at being present when capital charges were being heard, she seems to have always had an unhealthy interest in murder cases. Shortly before her death the terrible Stanfield Hall murder occupied a good deal of her attention. She was living then in a house on the Castle Meadow, and during the trial of Rush she wrote in a note:

"I know not what to do to-day, except look at the castle and watch the crowds on the plain, and the people continually passing, few walking, but most running, as if too much excited to do otherwise. Rush is on his defence. . . . I dread to hear the verdict, and yet I wish all was over. . . . On my castle turrets, to the west, the sun set gloriously this evening, converting it into a mass of red granite; and while I write the moon is shining into my room, 'looking tranquillity.' But what is passing within those castle walls? A man, fierce as a tiger, is struggling for life at the awful bar of justice. . . . Within those walls I see that wretched man, writhing in mental agony, and against what, I fancy, he now *believes* inevitable doom!"

The last five years of Amelia Opie's life were spent in the house on Castle Meadow—a house she described as a "pleasant cradle for reposing age," and from the windows of which she could see, not only the grand old castle on its huge mound, but the distant woods and rising ground of suburban Thorpe. Almost to the last —and she lived to a good old age—she kept around her a cheerful circle of firmly attached friends and admirers. Shortly after her death, Harriet Martineau, having remarked that "another of that curious class of English people—the provincial literary lion—has left us," wrote:

"When she began to grow elderly, Amelia Opie became *devote*. Her life had been one of strong excitements; and dearly she loved excitement; and there was a promise of a long course of stimulation in becoming a Quaker, which probably impelled her unconsciously to take the decided step which astonished all her world. During Mr. Opie's life excitements abounded. After his death, and when her mourning was over, she wrote little novels, read them to admiring friends in Norwich, who cried their eyes out at the pathetic scenes, read in her dramatic manner, and then she carried them to London, got considerable sums by them, and enjoyed the homage they brought to her feet, sang at supper-tables, dressed splendidly, did not scruple being present at Lady Cork's and others' Sunday concerts, and was very nearly marrying a younger brother of Lord Bute. . . . But she suddenly discovered that all is vanity: she took to grey silks and muslin, and the 'thee' and 'thou,' quoted Habakkuk and Micah with gusto, and set her heart upon preaching. That, however, was not allowed . . . and her utterance was confined to loud sighs in the body of the Meeting."

But even Miss Martineau draws a pleasing picture

of Mrs. Opie in her old age, and adds that with her "dies the last claim of the humbled city to the literary prominence which was so dear to it in the last century."

To Harriet Martineau, who spent the greater part of the first thirty years of her life in Norwich, and who commenced here her literary career, we owe some interesting glimpses into the social and literary life of the city during the first half of the nineteenth century; but her own associations with Norwich are far less clearly defined than those of many of her contemporaries; for while she held a prominent position in the literary world she was living either in London or at Ambleside. It was through the advice of her brother James, the distinguished Unitarian divine, that she wrote her first article for a Unitarian monthly magazine; and when it was accepted her elder brother, Thomas, was so impressed by its style that he told her to give up making shirts and darning stockings and devote herself to literature. A time soon arrived when the success which attended her ventures with the pen proved very useful to her; for owing to the depression of trade in the years 1825 and 1826, her father, who was a large manufacturer in Norwich, was brought on to the verge of ruin, a trouble which hastened his end. But when she came to write her autobiography she had little to say about her Norwich days which is really pleasant reading, her reminiscences of most of her old acquaintances being recorded with much uncharitableness, several persons being mentioned with no apparent reason save to say something spiteful about them. But for this some excuse may be found in her almost chronic ill-health. Quite from earliest childhood she was afflicted

with troublesome maladies, most of the unpleasant details of which she gave to the world when she wrote the story of her life; and in addition to these troubles she suffered for many years from acute nervousness. So painfully nervous was she that she hated to be sent out to walk on the Castle Hill simply because the people dwelling in the houses below used to beat their feather-beds in the Castle Meadow.

"That sound," she says, "—a dull shock—used to make my heart stand still: and it was no use my standing at the rails above, and seeing the process. The striking of the blow and the arrival of the sound did not correspond; and this made matters worse."

The Martineaus were, of course, Unitarians, worshipping in the old Octagon Chapel which contains several memorials of them. It had then, and probably has now, some curious windows in the roof, at which Harriet used to gaze—or, as she has it, "sit staring"—waiting for angels to come to her and take her to heaven "in sight of all the congregation—the end of the world being sure to happen while we were at chapel." But Harriet Martineau's account of herself as she was in the Norwich days is not particularly interesting. She is at her best (?) when she writes of others, as when she tells us that—

"About this time there came to Norwich a foreigner who excited an unaccountable interest in our house—considering what exceedingly proper people we were, and how sharp a look-out we kept on the morals of our neighbours. It was poor Polidori, well known afterwards as Lord Byron's physician, as the author of 'The Vampire,' and as having committed suicide under gambling difficulties. When we knew him he was a

handsome, harum-scarum young man—taken up by William Taylor as William Taylor did take up harum-scarum young men."

He was an avowed admirer of Harriet's eldest sister, and—

"We younger ones romanced amazingly about him—drew his remarkable profile on the backs of all our letters, dreamed of him, listened to all his marvellous stories, and, when he got a concussion of the brain by driving against a tree in Lord Stafford's park, were inconsolable. If he had (happily) died then, he would have remained a hero in our imaginations."

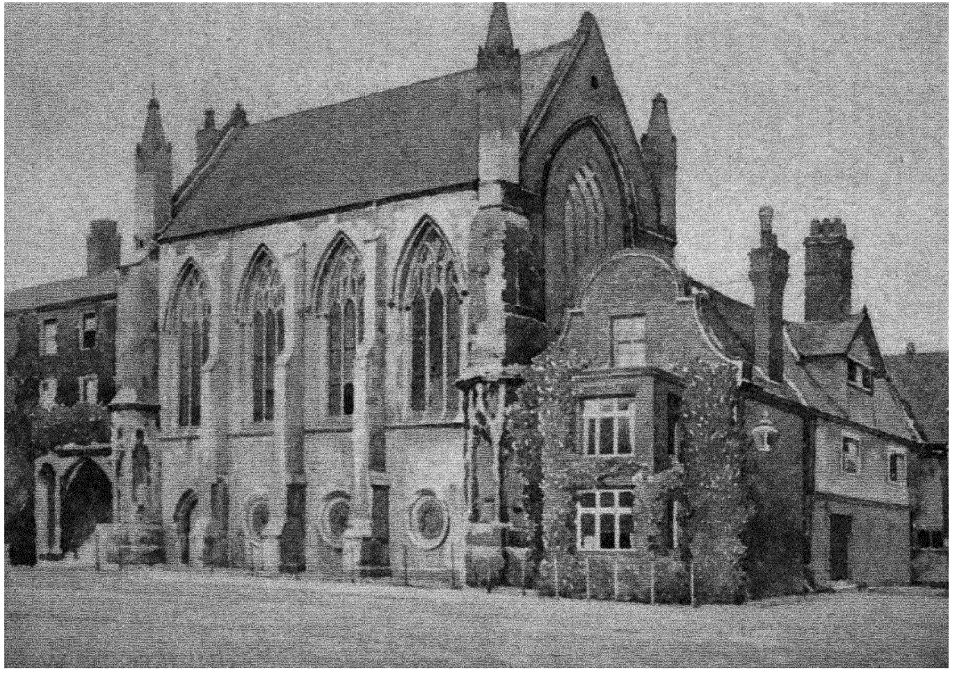
Of most of the literary celebrities of her day we get fleeting glimpses in the pages of Miss Martineau's autobiography; but only one of them—and one whom she mentions most disparagingly—has taken a place among the "immortals." Upon his Norwich contemporaries, with one or two exceptions, George Borrow failed to make any favourable impression; and if we may judge—which is hardly fair, perhaps—by Miss Martineau's assertions concerning him, he was not popular with them. But like Miss Martineau herself, he possessed a strong personality, and this, combined with a curious simplicity so manifest in his writings that we see the man himself, with all his idiosyncracies, as through a transparent veil, has won for him thousands of admirers who love him in spite of himself, and turn to his books again and again under the influence of a like spell to that cast upon them by Don Quixote or Benvenuto Cellini. In his day he was much assailed by critics because of those very prejudices and inconsistencies

which now attract and entertain us. As Mr. Augustine Birrell says:

"Borrow's books — carelessly written, impatient, petulant, in parts repellant—have been found so full of the elixir of life, of the charm of existence, of the glory of motion, so instinct with character, and mood, and wayward fancy, that their very names are sounds of enchantment, while the fleeting scenes they depict and the deeds they describe have become the properties and the pastimes for all the years that are still to be of a considerable fraction of the English speaking race."

For invalids, as the same critic assures us, and we can well believe, there are no books like Borrow's. Mrs. Opie, when confined to her room by illness, wrote: "Long live Don Jorge! he is my delight both night and morning, and my happiest hours are spent in his society." She was then reading the "Bible in Spain."

George Borrow first came to Norwich in 1814, when he was eleven years old; and while his parents occupied lodgings at the Crown and Angel in St. Stephen's Street, he attended the Grammar School in the Upper Close, his brother John meanwhile studying drawing and painting as a pupil of the old city's famous artist, John Crome. But the preparations for war which followed the escape of Napoleon from Elba, included the calling out of the West Norfolk Militia, and Captain Thomas Borrow, with his wife and two sons, had to be with his regiment until June, 1816, when he settled down in Norwich for the rest of his life. The house he occupied stands in a small yard now known as Borrow's Court, which is entered by a narrow tunnel-like passage from Willow Lane, which branches off St. Giles Street,



NORWICH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

a little way westward of the Guildhall. It is a plain two-storeyed house, in which few alterations have been made since the Borrows lived in it; but its front was then covered with ivy and some tall poplars shaded the dingy little court.

At the old Grammar School, of which the headmaster at that time was the Rev. Edward Valpy, George had for schoolfellows James Brooke, afterwards the famous Rajah of Sarawak; Archdale Wilson; John Lindley, whose name became noteworthy as that of a careful botanist; and James Martineau, whose death a few years ago robbed England of one of her most scholarly Unitarian divines. As a scholar George failed to distinguish himself in any way; according to Canon Jessopp, who was afterwards headmaster of the school, there was a tradition that he was indolent and even stupid; but one of his boyish escapades was well remembered in after days by some of his contemporaries at the school. Inspired, in all probability, by sensational tales he had read of pirates and highwaymen, the idea came into his head of running away from home, making a cave among the Norfolk sand dunes, and there leaguing himself with the local smugglers. In carrying out his plans he had two or three youthful accomplices. They started from Norwich early one morning by the Yarmouth road, carrying with them some horse-pistols they had purloined, and various provisions, including a supply of potatoes; but they had only reached a point about three miles from the city when the courage of one of the adventurers failed him and he returned home; the others continued their journey as far as the Broadland village of Acle, about eleven miles from Norwich, where

they halted to partake of some refreshment. While seated by the roadside they were recognised by a gentleman who was driving by as his son's schoolfellows, and, suspecting they were "playing truant," he stopped and enquired into their proceedings. If the verses George afterwards wrote contain an accurate report of the conversation that ensued, he must have been a singularly rude boy, well deserving the thrashing that was in store for him. According to his verses, the "Benevolent Gentleman" addressed the wanderers thus:

> "Return, poor thoughtless children, home,
> Or evil will ensue;
> There's sad temptation in the world
> For children such as you."

To this appeal the "Eldest Child," that is, George, adopting, no doubt, the slang of one of his favourite heroes, replied:

> "O stop a clapper on your jaw!
> We hate such stuff and cant;
> And keep your counsel for yourself;
> The rhino's what we want."

But, notwithstanding the youthful ringleader's bounce and rudeness, the "benevolent gentleman" invited the runaways to dine with him at a neighbouring inn; and, while they were thus engaged, secretly sent a despatch to Dr. Valpy, informing him of the whereabouts of his truant scholars. As a result, a carriage arrived at Acle late in the evening, and into it, in spite of young Borrow's protests, the boys were bundled and conveyed back to their homes.

The sequel, as Dr. Knapp remarks, was "short and

painful." George, as the ringleader of the would-be buccaneers, was taken in hand by Dr. Valpy, hoisted upon the back of James Martineau and flogged, we are told in one account, so severely that he "had to keep his bed for a fortnight, and would carry the marks for the remainder of his days." For this he is said to have hated the Grammar School and the celebrated Unitarian divine for ever after. Miss Frances Power Cobbe, who was afterwards Borrow's neighbour in Hereford Square, Brompton, writes in her Autobiography:

"The early connection between the two old men as I knew them was irresistibly comic to my mind. When I asked Mr. Borrow once to come and meet some friends at our house, he accepted our invitation as usual, but, on finding that Dr. Martineau was to be of the party, hastily withdrew his acceptance, nor did he ever after attend our little assemblies without first ascertaining that Dr. Martineau would not be present."

Dr. Martineau's account of the "hoisting" business is, however, that it was nothing exceptional, or capable of leaving permanent scars, Mr. Valpy not being given to excess of that kind. Borrow as a schoolboy, he writes:

"Used to gather about him three or four favourite schoolfellows, . . . and with a sheet of paper and a book on his knee, invent and tell a story, making rapid little pictures of such 'Dramatis Personæ' that came upon the stage. The plot was woven and spread out with much ingenuity; and the characters were various and well discriminated. But two of them were sure to turn up in every tale—the *Devil* and the *Pope:* and the working of the drama invariably had the same issue—the utter ruin and disgrace of these two Potentates. I

have often thought that there was a presage here of the mission which produced the 'Bible in Spain.'"

George may have been an idle boy, but there can be no doubt that at this time he was a dreamer; and we have no reason to discredit his own assertion that he had not been long in Norwich when he became possessed by that desire to learn foreign languages which led him to study so many more than he was able to master. He first applied himself to French and Italian, finding an instructor in the Abbé D'Eterville, a French *émigré* who had come to Norwich in 1792, and at the time when Borrow met him was living in that fine old fifteenth century house in St. Andrew's Street, now called Strangers' Hall. Concerning this worthy—"exul sacerdos; vone banished priest" he called himself—Borrow has a good deal to say in "Lavengro," and especially in that extended edition lately edited by Dr. Knapp. But he did not devote his time entirely to foreign languages.

"I had not forgotten," he writes, "the roving life I had led in former days nor its delights; neither was I formed by Nature to be a pallid indoor student. No, no! I was fond of other and, I say it boldly, better things than study. I had an attachment to the angle, ay, and to the gun likewise. . . . Sallying forth with it . . . far into the country, I seldom returned at night without a string of bullfinches, blackbirds, and linnets hanging in triumph round my neck."

And after writing this he has the impudence to add: "I speak as a fowler!" One of his favourite haunts when he went out fishing was that part of the Yare which flows at the foot of the lawn sloping down from

the front of the old home of the Gurneys at Earlham; and it was there one day, when he was trespassing, apparently, on the Earlham grounds, that he was discovered by that fine old Quaker gentleman, Joseph John Gurney, whose gentle remonstrances with him had the effect of making him less fond of the "cruel fishing," and who was afterwards mainly instrumental in his obtaining such employment from the Bible Society as took him to Russia and Spain.

But Borrow's early experiences of a wandering life seem to have given him a strong inclination for the company of wandering folk, and probably he was never happier than when he could abandon study and steal away on to the Castle Hill on a market or fair day and mingle with the gipsies who came there to sell their horses and display their skilful horsemanship. For that same Castle Hill, which is still the chief horse and cattle mart in the Eastern counties, has for many years been a centre towards which roving folk have gravitated, and even now there is no better place one can go to who wishes to meet the sturdy farming folk of East Anglia, and make the acquaintance of some of the few surviving genuine Romanies, together with other strange and interesting "men of the road." Borrow's biographer, who spent a long time in Norwich while solving the many puzzles of his hero's career, seems to have looked upon the Castle Hill as a rather fearsome place on account of its "discordant" noises and "mettlesome steeds," and certainly it is the last place where a grave professor of Yale would be likely to feel at home; but even he was impressed by the variety of human types to be met with there, "representing every character in

British fiction from Fielding to Thackeray." Borrow, however, was chiefly attracted by the swarthy gipsies, and it was on the Hill that he encountered once more the notable Ambrose Petulengro, whom readers of "Lavengro" know so well as "Jasper," and whose acquaintance he had made so strangely in the lane at Norman Cross. But so greatly does the speech of Borrow's gipsies differ from that of most of the Romanies we meet to-day, that one can hardly believe that when George expressed surprise at Jasper's remembering him, he replied :—

"Not so strange as you may think, brother; there is something in your face which would prevent people from forgetting you, even though they might wish it; and your face is not much altered since the time you wot of, though you are so much grown. I thought it was you, but to make sure I dodged about, inspecting you. I believe you felt me, though I never touched you; a sign, brother, that we are akin, that we are *dui palor*—two relations. Your blood beat when mine was near, as mine always does at the coming of a brother; and we became brothers in that lane."

In these few sentences there are at least four words an ordinary gipsy would hardly use; but then Borrow's gipsies were not ordinary gipsies.

From the Castle Hill, George and the gipsy descended among the low-lying streets around the Cathedral, crossed the fine old thirteenth century Bishop's Bridge, and scaled the heights of Mousehold Heath, then the wild tract of furze and heather we see in the famous picture by Old Crome. There the gipsies had their encampment, in a sheltered valley between two low hills, and

George made the acquaintance of Tawno Chikno's wife, Mrs. Petulengro, and the terrible old Mrs. Herne. There, too, during that and other visits to the tents of the rovers, he held those wonderful dialogues with Jasper, in one of which the gipsy—or was it Borrow, when he had had bitter experience of life?—uttered words of wisdom which have taught, and may still teach, a great and abiding truth.

"'Life is sweet, brother.'

"'Do you think so?'

"'Think so! There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?'

"'I would wish to die——'

"'You talk like a gorgio—which is the same as talking like a fool. Were you a Rommany Chal you would talk wiser. Wish to die, indeed! A Rommany Chal would wish to live for ever.'

"'In sickness, Jasper?'

"'There's the sun and stars, brother.'

"'In blindness, Jasper?'

"'There's the wind on the heath; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live for ever.'"

From frequent meeting with the gipsies, George was led to add the mysterious Romany tongue to the languages in which he dabbled like a goose in muddy water; and a little later, at the instigation of William Taylor, he "took up" German, at the same time acquiring from that gifted but dissipated philosopher certain ideas which in those days, when free-thinking was looked upon as something very dreadful, brought him into sad disgrace with the more steady-going of his

acquaintances. Taylor was a friend of Southey, to whom he wrote:—

"A Norwich young man is construing with me Schiller's 'Wilhelm Tell,' with the view of translating it for the press. His name is George Henry Borrow, and he has learnt German with extraordinary rapidity; indeed, he has the gift of tongues, and though not yet eighteen understands twelve languages—English, Welsh, Erse, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Danish, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese."

Harriet Martineau is less flattering to Borrow; for she tells us that when Taylor's intemperate habits made him an "impossible" companion for ladies, he got around him "a set of ignorant and conceited young men who thought they could set the world right by their destructive propensities. One of his chief favourites was George Borrow."

And in describing the old city as she could remember it, she wrote:—

"Norwich, which has now no social claims to superiority at all, was in my childhood a rival of Lichfield itself, in the time of the Sewards, for literary pretensions and the vulgarity of pedantry. William Taylor was then at his best, when there was something like fulfilment of his early promise, when his exemplary filial duty was a fine spectacle to the whole city, and before the vice which destroyed him had coarsened his morale and destroyed his intellect. During the war it was a great distinction to know anything of German literature, and in Mr. Taylor's case it proved a ruinous distinction. He was completely spoiled by the flatteries of shallow men, pedantic women, and conceited lads."

Elsewhere she says :—

"When William Taylor became eminent as almost the only German scholar in England, old Norwich was very proud, and grew, to say the truth, excessively conceited. . . . She boasted of her intellectual supper-parties, where, amidst a pedantry which would now make Laughter hold both his sides, there was much that was pleasant and salutary : and finally she called herself the Athens of England . . . a provincial city up in a corner, which called itself Athens."

As yet, however, Borrow had hardly been admitted into this "pleasant and salutary" society; for while Taylor was exerting his influence upon him, his time was chiefly occupied with the duties of a lawyer's clerk in Messrs. Simpson and Rackham's office in Tuck's Court, St. Giles. The head of this firm was William Simpson, Town Clerk of Norwich, whose full-length portrait now hangs in the Guildhall. An almost equally good idea of him can be gained from Borrow's pen-portrait of him in "Lavengro," though less space is devoted to him there than is given in the opening chapter of "Wild Wales" to his Welsh groom. With Messrs. Simpson and Rackham, George remained during the five years for which he was articled to them; but he seems to have acquired only a very slight knowledge of law, preferring rather to spend his time in learning languages, making translations, and dreaming dreams. He had not been long in the lawyer's office before he turned his hand from copying deeds to rendering into English verse certain German and Danish ballads, and, having been introduced by Taylor to the editors of the "New Monthly" and the "Monthly

Magazine," he succeeded in getting some of his verses inserted in their pages. His most ambitious effort was a translation of Burger's "Lenore." It was, remarks his biographer, "probably the worst attempt ever perpetrated on the 'benevolent reader,' and coming after the excellent performances of Taylor and Scott, was, to say the least, a case of inexcusable presumption." He also wrote an original article on "Danish Poetry and Ballad Writing." These, his earliest efforts in literature, were, for reasons best known to himself, signed "George *Olaus* Borrow." It is evident that at the outset of his literary career, he set his feet into a morass in which he was destined to flounder miserably and helplessly for several years, and from which he was not to escape until disgust nerved him to force a way to freedom. For his venturing into what Mr. Thomas Seccombe calls "a veritable *cul-de-sac* of literature," the chief responsibility lies with William Taylor.

In February, 1824, within a few days of the time when George would be free to take his leave of the lawyer's office, his father died and was buried in the churchyard of St. Giles. An annual income of £100 a year was left to his widow—all that the old captain's little property could produce—so it was at once evident to George that he must be up and doing something for himself. For some time his health had not been good; but apparently he imagined it a good deal worse than it really was; and when the death of his father brought him face to face with the need for action, he was not long in deciding what he would do. In a letter written to his friend Roger Kerrison, about a fortnight before the term of his clerkship expired, he expressed an

intention "to live in London, write plays, poetry, etc., abuse religion, and get myself prosecuted, for I would not for an ocean of gold remain any longer than I am forced in this dull and gloomy town." What fate had in store for him is well known to readers of "Lavengro;" but bad as it proved to be, it was no worse than might have been anticipated for a morose and impatient youth who went out into the world with such mad intentions and so ill-equipped to fight the battle of life. Fortunately for him, and for us, a time came when he had the sense to recognize how ill-directed were his ambitions and to profit by a recognition of his folly. But at the outset, he was impatient to taste the joys of "freedom." His articles with Messrs. Simpson and Rackham expired on March 30th, 1824, and two days later—there is suggestiveness in the date—he started for London by the Ipswich Mail.

From what was for a long time called the "veiled period" of Borrow's life, the curtain has been almost entirely lifted by his biographer, Dr. Knapp; and we now know that although George, when disappointed with the result of his literary efforts in London, certainly did "take to the road," and probably did meet with the adventures recounted in "Lavengro," the greater part of the ensuing seven years was spent in Norwich and chiefly devoted to hack-work for publishers, newspapers, and magazines. And it is evident that in course of time he came to have a better opinion of the "dull and gloomy" old city; for when, during the quiet days at Oulton, he sat down to write of his life here, he saw the city through rose-coloured glasses.

"A fine old city, truly, is that," he says, "view it from whatever side you will; but it shows best from the east, where the ground, bold and elevated, overlooks the fair and fertile valley in which it stands. Gazing from these heights, the eye beholds a scene which cannot fail to awaken, even in the least sensitive bosom, feelings of pleasure and admiration. At the foot of the heights flows a narrow and deep river, with an antique bridge communicating with a long and narrow suburb, flanked on either side by rich meadows of the brightest green, beyond which spreads the city; the fine old city, perhaps the most curious specimen at present extant of the genuine old English town. Yes, there it spreads from north to south, with its venerable houses, its numerous gardens, its thrice twelve churches, its mighty mound, which, if tradition speaks true, was raised by human hands to serve as the grave heap of an old heathen king, who sits deep within it, with his sword in his hand, and his gold and silver treasures about him. There is a grey old castle upon the top of that mighty mound; and yonder, rising three hundred feet above the soil, from among those noble forest trees, behold that old Norman master-work, that cloud-encircled cathedral spire, around which a garrulous army of rooks and choughs continually wheel their flight. Now, who can wonder that the children of that fine old city are proud of her, and offer up prayers for her prosperity? I, myself, who was not born within her walls, offer up prayers for her prosperity, that want may never visit her cottages, vice her palaces, and that the abomination of idolatry may never pollute her temples. Ha! idolatry! the reign of idolatry has been over there for many a long year, never more, let us hope, to return; brave hearts in that old town have borne witness against it, and sealed their testimony with their hearts' blood—most precious to the Lord is the blood of His saints! we are not far from hallowed ground."

Here we have an enthusiastic but chastened Borrow, differing as much from the Borrow who went raging up to London to "abuse religion and get himself prosecuted" as a skipping lamb differs from a roaring lion. But the change in him was not wrought without the infliction of many trials and much tribulation; not in a day was the raw, raving youth who could

> "Drink at a draught a pint of rum,
> And then be neither sick or dumb,"

transformed into the ardent agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

As I have already said, it was his old acquaintance of the angling days at Earlham who secured for him the employment which has resulted in our possessing "The Bible in Spain." This occurred at the end of the year 1832, and, according to Harriet Martineau, the news that "this polyglott gentleman" had appeared before the public as a devout agent of the Bible Society caused "one burst of laughter from all who remembered the old Norwich days." But Borrow was to visit Russia before making his first journey into Spain; and as for his adventures in those countries, are they not written in the book of Dr. Knapp and "The Bible in Spain"?

At the beginning of this chapter, an attempt is made to convey some idea of the literary life of Norwich during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the earlier half of the nineteenth. Before turning to some of the earlier literary associations of the old city, one may be excused for calling attention to the fact that the same hundred years which saw Norwich so famous for its literary life, also saw the rise and decline of that

School of Artists for which Norwich is perhaps even more renowned to-day than for its long roll of famous men and women of letters. In the diaries and letters of the Norwich "intellectuals" of their day, references to "Old" Crome and John Sell Cotman are few and unenlightening; sons, respectively, of a poor innkeeper and a linen-draper, these talented artists could hardly have dwelt in any city or town where their exceptional ability would have been less likely to receive full recognition than in Norwich. George Borrow has left us a glowing eulogy of Crome, and it is only natural, perhaps, that he, a lover of the heath, the highway, and the greenwood, should have appreciated the painter of *Mousehold Heath* and *The Coming of the Storm* a good deal better than could those local dignitaries and celebrities who were having their portraits painted by Beechey. Crome, with an oyster shell for a palette when he could not get a better one, went straight to Nature, and like Constable and Gainsborough, who were also East Anglians, he found the subjects of most of his best works in his own immediate homeland. Out of material, apparently, the most unpromising he made masterpieces, putting into practice his advice to his son: "John, my boy, paint; but paint for fame; and if your subject is only a pig-sty—dignify it!" To-day, the little man stands out among the Norwich celebrities of his day almost as boldly as a giant among pygmies —a master among mannikins. As has recently been said of him, he "is great because he was a stay-at-home; because he studied Nature, not Art; because, like Millet, he was strong, large, elemental, and because he had mastered his craft." In Cotman, Starke, and

Vincent, he had worthy artistic contemporaries in Norwich ; but when one hears the Norwich School of Artists mentioned, the figure of Old Crome, the errand boy who became one of the greatest of British artists, at once stands before us. Of late, more than ever, he has occupied a prominent place in the literature of Art —a fact which is, perhaps, my only justification for introducing him into these pages.

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CHAPTER VIII

SIR THOMAS BROWNE AND BISHOP HALL

Simon Wilkin, the editor of Sir Thomas Browne—Browne's arrival in Norwich—Publication of "Religio Medici," "Vulgar Errors," and "Urn Burial"—Browne's Norwich home—His correspondents—Visited by Evelyn—William Wotton—A quiet life-story—Browne's domestic correspondence—"Honest Tom"—Letters to Dr. Edward Browne—Local Gossip—Highwaymen—Sir Thomas as a naturalist—Coleridge on the "Garden of Cyrus"—Browne as an antiquary—His "habit" of clothing—His death—An unpleasant sequel—Bishop Hall—His release from the Tower—Made Bishop of Norwich—Ejected from his palace—"Hard Measure"—Removes to Heigham—The Dolphin Inn—Hall's latter years—His death—His tomb.

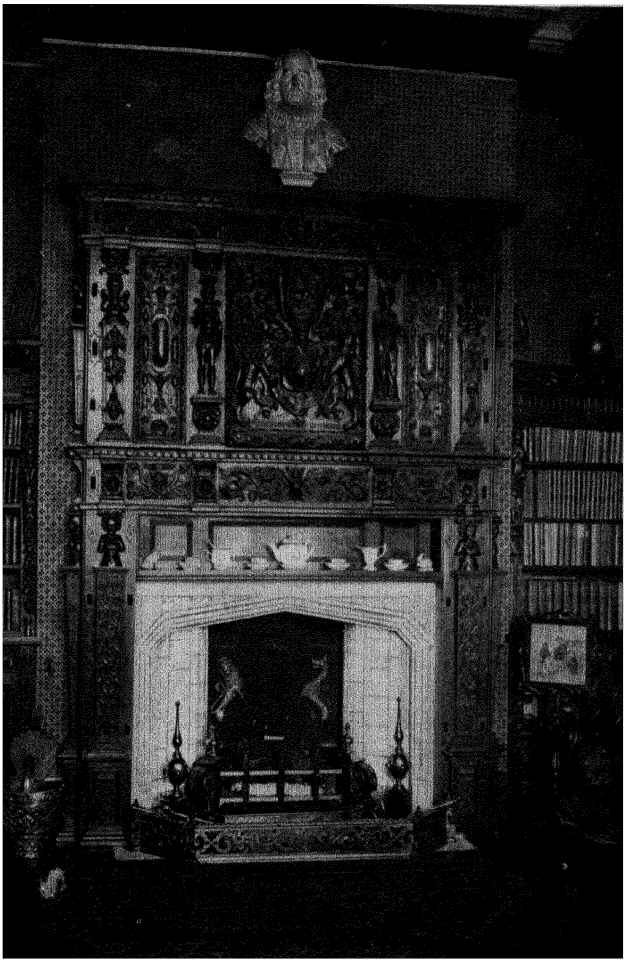
DURING the latter years of William Taylor's life, and while his *protégé*, George Borrow, after attempting to set the Thames on fire, was engaged in his early work for the Bible Society, a native of the village of Costessy, in Norfolk, Simon Wilkin by name, was well employed in laboriously preparing for the press the collected works of the greatest scholar and most original thinker that ever dwelt within the walls of Norwich. More than a century had elapsed since the mortal remains of Sir Thomas Browne had been laid to rest in the heart of the city in which he had spent the greater part of his life; and during that time various editions of his better known works had been published,

with the result that at least one of them had established itself as an English classic; but until Wilkin set himself the task of bringing together all—or nearly all—his writings, and collecting every scrap of available information concerning their learned author, little was known of the personality of Sir Thomas Browne and, save for one or two brief glimpses of him in contemporary writings, practically nothing of his life in the city of his adoption. And even his careful and diligent editor was able to discover only a few really interesting facts about him. We know that he had many and various interests, and that during his mature years he can have spent few idle days; but his life seems to have been a quiet and uneventful one, notwithstanding that it included the stirring years of the Civil War of Charles the First's reign, the whole of the Commonwealth, and nearly a quarter of a century ensuing upon the Restoration. During his residence in Norwich he saw the city put in a state of defence against the Royalists, its fine old cathedral despoiled by fanatics, and, subsequently, the restoration of a king celebrated with as much rejoicing as had hailed the triumph of the Parliament; but by these stirring events he appears to have been less moved than by the discovery of an ancient burial urn or the acquisition of a rare bird or flower. So far as we can ascertain, he seems to have been so occupied with his books, his musings, his scientific researches, and his domestic affairs, that he had very little time to give to political matters; content with meditative ramblings and the quiet of his study, he dwelt as on a restful islet in a troubled sea.

Neither Norwich nor East Anglia can claim Sir

Thomas Browne as a native, for he was born in London, where his father was a Cheapside mercer, and he belonged to a family which had been connected with Upton, in Cheshire, for several generations; but he came to reside in the Norfolk capital when he was little more than thirty years of age, and he lived here for the rest of his life. Before settling down in the city, he had practised as a physician at Shipden Hall, near Halifax; and his removal from that place is believed to have been due to his desire for a wider field of action; but the influence of friends in Norfolk probably led to his choosing Norwich[1] to practise in. About four years after his arrival here, he married Dorothy, the fourth daughter of Edward Mileham, whose home was at Burlingham St. Peter; and a few months later the unauthorized publication of his "Religio Medici"—which seems to have been written while he was at Shipden Hall—made him famous. Four years later he printed his "Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors," and after a lapse of twelve years the discovery of some ancient burial urns at Walsingham, in Norfolk, led him to write his famous

[1] In the "Norfolk Antiquarian Miscellany" (2nd Series, Part I., pp. 83–85) Mr. Walter Rye suggests that Browne may have come to Norwich on the suggestion of some rich relative. At that time there were living in the city an Alderman William Browne, who was a flourishing draper and occupied the "Samson and Hercules" House (so-called from the figures supporting the portico) on Tombland; also a John Browne, residing in the same parish of St. George Tombland. The fact that no one has been able to ascertain where Browne lived in Norwich during the early part of his time here may be accounted for, as Mr. Rye remarks, if he was living in a kinsman's house.



MANTELPIECE FORMERLY IN SIR THOMAS BROWNE'S HOUSE IN NORWICH
NOW IN STOKE HOLY CROSS HALL

essay on "Urn Burial," which was issued with his "Garden of Cyrus." With the exception of some short papers, these were the last of his works issued in his lifetime. Sundry tracts on various subjects were printed after his death, which occurred in 1682; but, owing to the manuscript being mislaid, his "Christian Morals" did not appear until 1716, when the first edition, prepared for the press by Dr. John Jeffery, Archdeacon of Norwich, was printed at Cambridge.

The few known facts of his life in Norwich are easily summarized. We are told that soon after his settlement in the city he was much resorted to "for his admirable skill in physick"; but in what part of Norwich he lived before his marriage, and during the first few years of his wedded life, is doubtful. In 1650, however, he seems to have been residing in the parish of St. Peter Mancroft, and by that time he had probably taken possession of a house which stood at the southern end of the "Walk," bordering the market-place on its east side. In this house, which has long been demolished, he dwelt for the remainder of his life. He was in frequent correspondence with several of the most distinguished men of his time, among them being John Evelyn and Sir William Dugdale, the former of whom sought his assistance as a botanist, while the latter applied to him for aid in connection with his great work on "Imbanking and Draining." To Dr. Christopher Merrett he sent several interesting letters dealing with the natural history of Norfolk; and from an Icelandic correspondent he contrived to extract certain information concerning a then little-known island. Two of his most intimate friends were Sir Hamon le Strange,

of Hunstanton (who was a keen naturalist), and Robert Paston, Earl of Yarmouth, who was a frequent traveller abroad, and as fond as Browne himself of picking up curious information. In September, 1671, King Charles II., accompanied by his Queen, paid a visit to Norwich, and conferred the honour of knighthood upon Browne, the ceremony taking place in St. Andrew's Hall, or, as it was then called, the "New Hall." Early in the following month, Evelyn, who had joined the royal party at Euston Hall, in Suffolk, the seat of the Earl of Arlington, was persuaded by Lord Henry Howard to accompany him to Norwich.

"This," he writes, "as I could not refuse I was not hard to be persuaded to, having a desire to see that famous scholar and physitian, Dr. T. Browne, author of the 'Religio Medici,' and 'Vulgar Errors,' etc., now lately knighted. Thither then went my lord and I alone, in his flying chariot with six horses; and by the way, discoursing with me of severall of his concernes, he aquainted me of his going to marry his eldest sonn to one of the king's natural daughters by the Dutchesse of Cleaveland, by which he reckon'd he should come into mighty favour.

"Next morning I went to see Sir Tho. Browne (with whom I had some time corresponded by letter, tho' I had never seen him before). His whole house and garden being a paradise and cabinet of rarities, and that of the best collections, especially medails, books, plants, and natural things. Amongst other curiosities, Sir Thomas had a collection of the eggs of all the foule and birds he could procure, that country (especially the promontory of Norfolck) being frequented, as he said, by severall kinds, which seldom or never go farther into the land, as cranes, storkes, eagles, and a variety of water-foule. He led me to see all the remarkable

places of this ancient citty, being one of the largest, and certainly, after London, one of the noblest of England, for its venerable cathedrall, number of stately churches, cleannesse of the streetes, and buildings of flints, so exquisitely headed and squared, as I was much astonished at; but he told me they had lost the art of squaring the flints, in which they once so much excell'd, and of which the churches, best houses, and walls, are built. The castle is an antique extent of ground, which they now call Marsfield, and would have been a fitting area to have placed the ducal palace on. The suburbs are large, the prospects sweete, with other amenities, not omitting the flower gardens, in which all the inhabitants excel. The fabric of stuffs brings a vast trade to this populous towne."

In the course of the following year William Wotton, afterwards the friend of Richard Bentley, but then a precocious child of six, was brought to Sir Thomas Browne in order that the latter might testify to his remarkable cleverness, which he did as follows:—

"I do hereby declare and certify, that I heard Wm. Wotton, son of Mr. Henry Wotton, of Wrentham, of the age of six years, read a stanza in Spencer very distinctly, and pronounce it properly. As also some verses in the 1st Eclogue of Virgil, which I purposely chose out, and also construe the same truly. Also some verses in Homer, and the *Carmina Aurea* of Pythagoras, which he read well and construed. As he did also the 1st verse of the 4th ch. of Genesis in Hebrew, which I purposely chose out. July 20, 1672. Tho. Browne."

In the story of the remaining years of Browne's life, as told by Wilkin, there is no event standing out in the slightest relief; and we may assume that those

years were passed in quiet study and observation, in meditating on those problems of life, death, and immortality which always fascinated him, "in a moth-like flitting to and fro in regions where no certainty can be attained." His was a life to baffle the biographer in quest of such knowledge of his subject as would enable him to describe him under varied circumstances calculated to reveal clearly his many-sided individuality; and for real knowledge of him we are almost entirely indebted to his books and correspondence, which, if read with a purpose for which they were not primarily intended, enable the reader to fill many blanks in his scanty biography. With the aid of their revelation of interests and occasional hints of rambles taken and observations made, we can piece together a quiet life-story and in a measure reconstruct a personality of which we have no very enlightening contemporary presentment.

Turning to Browne's domestic correspondence, we soon make a favourable estimate of him as a father from his letters to his younger son Thomas, who, at the early age of fourteen, was sent alone to France to increase his knowledge of the world. Dr. Browne, who generally addresses him as "Honest Tom," gives him much good advice as to how he should conduct himself in his strange surroundings. He tells him to

"be courteous and civil to all, put on a decent boldness and avoid *pudor rusticus*, not much known in France. Hold firm to the Protestant religion," he adds, "and be diligent in going to church when you have any little knowledge of the language. God will accept of your desires to serve him in his public worship tho' you cannot make it out to your desires."

He promises not to forget to send Tom a New Year's gift, and playfully signs himself "Vostre tres chere Pere." In a later letter he trusts that Tom has by now "got somewhat beyond *Plaist il* and *ouy Monsieur;*" and after telling him of some additions to his coin collection, and giving him some news of what was going on in Norwich, asks him not to send home any gifts.

"Good boy, doe not trouble thyself to send us anything, either wine or bacon . . . You may stay your stomack with little pastys some times in cold mornings, for I doubt sea larks will be too dear a collation and drawe to too much wine down; be warie for Rochelle was a place of too much good fellowship and a very drinking town, as I observed when I was there."

Young Thomas Browne subsequently entered the navy, making his first voyage into the Mediterranean on board the *Foresight.* On returning to England he joined the fleet under command of James, Duke of York and the Earl of Sandwich, and was present at the first great action fought with the Dutch off Lowestoft. Soon after he distinguished himself in an attempt made to seize the two Dutch East Indian fleets which had sheltered in Bergen harbour. After this he saw much fighting, but of his career subsequent to 1667 we know nothing. It seems not unlikely that he was drowned at sea. On the occasion of his first cruise, his father wrote to him:—

"HONEST TOM,—God blesse thee, and protect thee, and mercifully lead you through the wayes of his providence. I am much grieved you have such a cold, sharpe, and hard introduction, wch addes newe feares

unto mee for your health, whereof pray bee carefull, and as good an husband as possible, wch will gayne you credit, and make you better trusted in all affayres. I am sorry you went unprovided with bookes, without wch you cannot well spend time in those great shipps. If you have a globe you may easily learne the starres as also by bookes. . . . If they have quadrants, crosse-staffes, and other instruments, learn the practicall use thereof; the names of all parts and roupes about the shippe, what proportion the masts must hold to the length and depth of a shippe, and also the sayles. I hope you receaved my letters from Nancy, after you were gone, wherein was a playne electuary agaynst the scurvie. . . . Forget not French and Latin. No such defence agaynst extreme cold, as a woollen or flannell wascoat next the skinne."

A good many of Sir Thomas Browne's letters to his eldest son, Edward, are also preserved, some written to him while he was travelling abroad, others to him when in London, where he practised as a physician. These letters contain a considerable amount of such information as an elderly doctor would be likely to send to a younger one; also occasional references to events which had taken place in Norwich. On November 24th, 1679, he wrote:—

"DEAR SONNE, The Feverish and aguish distempers, which beganne to be common in August, are now very much abated, and few fall sick thereof; only there are very great number of quartans; 'tis also a coughing time. Extraordinarie sickly seasons worrie physitians, and robb them of their quiet; have therefore a great care of your health, and order your affayres to the best preservation thereof, which may bee by temperance, and sobrietie, and a good competence of sleepe.

Take heed that tobacco gayne not to much upon you, for the great incomodities that may ensue, and the bewiching qualitie of it, which draws a man to take more and more the longer hee hath taken it; as also the *ructus nidorosus*, or like burnt hard eggs, and the hart burning after much taking at a time, and also the impayring of the memorie, &c."

In August of the following year he wrote:—

"If the profitts of the next year come not up to this, I would not haue you discouraged; for the profitts of no practise are equal or regular: and you haue had some extraordinary patients this yeare, which, perhaps, some yeares will not afford. Now is your time to be frugall and lay up. I thought myself rich enough till my children grew up. Be carefull of your self, and temperate, that you may bee able to go through your practise; for to attayne to the getting of a thousand a yeare requires no small labour of body and mind, and is a life not much less paynfull and laborious than that wch the meaner sort of people go through. When you put out your money, bee well assured of the assurance; and bee wise therein from what your father hath suffered. It is laudable to dwell handsomely, butt bee not too forward to build or sett forth another man's howse, or so to fill it that it may increase the fuell, if God should please to send fire. . . . Excesse in aparell and chargeable dresses are got into the country, especially among woeman; men go decently and playn enough. The last assizes there was a concourse of woeman at that they call my lords garden in Cunsford, and so richly dressed that some stranger sayd there was scarce the like to be seen in Hide Park, which makes charity cold."

Occasionally he retails local news and gossip for the amusement of his absent son; as when he relates how

his neighbour, Alderman Briggs, who was a Norwich burgess in Parliament, was stopped by highwaymen between Barton Mills and Thetford; but not much money was lost,

"passengers vsually trauelling with little money about them, but the coachman lost fifteen pounds which he caryed to buye a horse. Captaine Briggs, my neibour, would haue made some resistence, but they presently took awaye his sword which hee used to weare in parliament: his man also was gone out of sight, and none of the trauellers would joyne with him to make resistence."

About the same time he tells of the death of an old man who lived beyond "Schoale Inne," and who "wayted on the Earl of Leicester, when Queen Eliz. came to Norwich, and who told mee many things thereof." Now and again we get a bit of home-life chat:—

"I am fayne to keep myself warm by a fire side this cold weather. . . . Here was so much sider made this last autumne, that there will not bee half so much French wine spent here as in other yeares, nor probably hereafter, for there is so much planting of apple trees and fruits, that they will become so cheap that there will be little profit thereby; the last was a strange plentiful yeare of fruit, and my wife tells me shee bought above twentie quinces for a penny; . . . Little Tom comes loaded from the fayre this day, and wishes his sister had some of them."

No one can read, or even glance, through the "Vulgar Errors" without appreciating the fact that Sir Thomas Browne was a keen naturalist; though in that particular work his main object was to disabuse

the public mind of many current superstitions and mistaken beliefs. One day we find him occupied with examining a badger, to discover whether or not the legs on one side are shorter than those on the other; another day he is experimenting with a dead kingfisher, to see whether or not, if hanged up by the bill, it will show which way the wind blows; while a little later he is examining moles to see if they are blind, and lampreys to ascertain the number of their eyes. Not infrequently he appears to have explored the fens and marshes of Norfolk, and when there to have made notes of the birds he saw, and their habits. Among the birds in which he was specially interested was the bittern; and by careful observation he satisfied himself that its peculiar booming note was produced neither by the bird putting its bill into a reed nor into mud or water. He mentions excursions made to Yarmouth; and we know that while there he questioned the "eryngo-diggers" he met with among the sand-dunes as to how the ringed plovers arranged their eggs in the nest. In the dusk of summer nights he strolled along the quiet country roads and lanes around Norwich, pausing now and again to pick up glowworms, to be kept alive for two or three weeks on fresh turf in order that he might ascertain the nature of their light. One can imagine him providing himself with a varied assortment of pill-boxes, in which to preserve captured spiders, grasshoppers, and fen crickets; while Dame Dorothy Browne, when brushing his dusty clothes, would be wary of investigating the contents of the pockets owing to the possible presence there of a forgotten toad. In his garden he had an aviary for the wild birds captured

and brought to him by the Norfolk wildfowlers: among his bird pets were bitterns (one of which he kept alive two years and fed with "fish, mice, and frogges"), shearwaters, stone curlews, and a golden eagle, though the last-named, he is careful to make clear to us, was not taken in Norfolk, but sent to him from Ireland. Whenever he visited the seaside—and he seems to have stayed at times at Yarmouth, Cromer, and on the North Norfolk coast—he found endless amusement in collecting shells, star-fish, jelly-fish, and curiosities from the nets of the 'longshore fishermen; and, with an utter disregard for the olfactory sensibilities of Alderman Briggs and his other neighbours, he would hang up in his back yard a dead shark or dolphin. Far less objectionable, save in the case of weeds bearing seeds which the wind would distribute over adjoining gardens, was his custom of growing in his own garden curious plants he found in the course of his country rambles, which sometimes extended as far as the wild heaths of Breckland.

That strange mixture of nonsense and fine writing, the "Garden of Cyrus," cannot be read without its being realized that the study of plants was one of Browne's favourite hobbies; though it is very doubtful if any botanist ever extracted a grain of useful knowledge from the mass of herbalistic chatter contained in that wonderful book. Browne was a lover of gardens, and in Norwich there were many fine gardens to delight him; but who save Browne, while he might have been enjoying their fragrance and beauty, would have spent his time in seeking, there and everywhere, "quincunxes," with the result that long years afterwards Coleridge,

after reading the "Garden of Cyrus," found his brain in such a whirl that he saw "quincunxes in heaven above, quincunxes in earth below, quincunxes in the mind of man, quincunxes in tones, in optic nerves, in roots of trees, in leaves, in everything." But, as Mr. Edmund Gosse says, this "radically bad book contains some of the loveliest paragraphs which passed from an English pen during the seventeenth century;" and we can forgive the perpetration of many dismally dull pages for the sake of such a passage as that with which Browne completed the book one midnight of March, 1658, as he sat alone, like an old astrologer, in the midst of the sleeping city, and saw the Hyades twinkling above the horizon.

"But the quincunx of heaven runs low, and 'tis time to close the five ports of knowledge. We are unwilling to spin out our awaking thoughts into the phantasms of sleep, which often continueth precogitations; making cables of cobwebs, and wildernesses of handsome groves. Besides, Hippocrates hath spoke so little, and the oneiro-critical masters have left such frigid interpretations from plants, that there is little encouragement to dream of Paradise itself. Nor will the sweetest delights of gardens afford much comfort in sleep; wherein the dullness of that sense shakes hands with delectable odours; and though in the bed of Cleopatra, can hardly with any delight raise up the ghost of a rose. Night, which Pagan theology could make the daughter of Chaos, affords no advantage to the description of order; although no lower than that mass can we derive its genealogy. All things began in order, so shall they end, and so shall they begin again; according to the ordainer or order and mystical mathematicks of the city of heaven. Though Somnus in Homer be sent to rouse up Agamemnon, I find no

such effects in these drowsy approaches of sleep. To keep our eyes open longer, were but to act our Antipodes. The huntsmen are up in America, and they are already past their first sleep in Persia. But who can be drowsy at that hour which freed us from everlasting sleep? or have slumbering thoughts at that time, when sleep itself must end, and as some conjecture all shall awake again?"

Well might Coleridge pencil on the margin of his copy of the "Garden of Cyrus"—

"Think you that there ever was such a reason given before for going to bed at midnight; to wit, that if we did not, we should be *acting* the part of our antipodes! And then—'THE HUNTSMEN ARE UP IN AMERICA'—what life, what fancy! Does the whimsical knight give us, thus, the *essence* of gunpowder tea, and call it an *opiate?*"

But our Norwich scholar and botanist was also an antiquary; indeed, he might have written, as Goldsmith did, "I love everything that's old—old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine." One of the attractions his house had for visitors to Norwich was its collection of antiquities, to which he never lost an opportunity of adding any curiosity which might be unearthed in Norfolk. Conscientious as he was, that would, I fancy, have been an unlucky patient of his whose illness took a serious turn when the news was brought to Norwich that a great "find" of ancient burial urns had been made in a field at Old Walsingham; for it is doubtful if the worthy doctor, in his anxiety to see these treasures, would not have considered their preservation from careless injury the more

urgent "case." But his magnificent treatise on "Urn-Burial" is not a work to which one can turn with any hope of receiving archæological enlightenment; as Mr. Gosse truly says, "Browne's whole interest in these brown pots centred around their human associations." The sight of them suddenly fanned the sinking flame of his imagination, and, after years of literary idleness, it glowed again like a gorgeous pyre, illuminating the darkest recesses of the tomb. By the light of it we see revealed the faces of Homer's heroes and old Norse vikings, of Roman emperors and Celtic priests; and all the time the walls of the hall of death re-echo the music of a dirge-like march by which the sons of men move onward to the grave. Browne had hardly set down the few facts of the Walsingham discovery than he lost sight of them; nor are we troubled one bit by his assigning the urns to a period to which they did not belong. What can we care for the archæological accuracy of a writer who, starting with a description of the finding of some urns, is presently declaiming—

"It is the heaviest stone that melancholy can throw at a man to tell him he is at the end of his nature; or that there is no further state to come, unto which this seems progressional, and otherwise made in vain. Without this accomplishment, the natural expectation and desire of such a state were but a fallacy in nature; unsatisfied considerators would quarrel the justice of their constitutions, and rest content that Adam had fallen lower; whereby, by knowing no other original, and deeper ignorance of themselves, they might have enjoyed the happiness of inferior creatures, who in tranquillity possess their constitutions, as having not the apprehension to deplore their own natures, and, being

framed below the circumference of these hopes, or cognition of better being, the wisdom of God hath necessitated their contentment: but the superior ingredient and obscured part of ourselves, whereto all present felicities afford no resting contentment, will be able at last to tell us we are more than our present selves, and evacuate such hopes in the fruition of their own accomplishments."

Yet Browne, when so minded, could write an archæological treatise as clearly and concisely as any modern delver into barrow, cave, or earthwork; for when, some years after the discovery of the Walsingham urns, others were found at Brampton, near Norwich, he gave an account of the circumstances attending their discovery, which is nearly all that could be desired; nor did he allow his imagination to run away with him.

"We see him, in the mind's eye," writes Mr. Gosse, "standing in the wet ploughed field at Brampton, watching the excavation with eager eyes, and driven nearly to frenzy by the clumsiness of the labourers. The ground was soft with rain, and when the men used their picks, the urns were revealed, but, at first, 'earnestly and carelessly digging, they broke all they met with, and finding nothing but ashes and burnt bones, they scattered what they found.' Nor even when Browne hung over them, directing their labours, were matters much better, for 'though I met with two (urns) in the side of the ditch, and used all care I could with the workmen, yet they were broken.'"

Such notes as these, scattered throughout his writings, together with his domestic correspondence, present the old Norwich physician to us more clearly than his biographers have done, and help to reveal an attractive

personality. The life he lived after he settled down in Norwich was essentially provincial; and as a doctor he must have been considered, in his latter years, "behind the times"; but the conditions of a provincial life, spent in a fine old city surrounded by a country rich in wild life and interesting antiquities, were favourable to the development of his various tastes and vivid imagination. One can easily believe that his whimsical sayings and numerous hobbies provided amusement for his friends and acquaintances, who would often go out of their way to procure for him rare birds and plants and other curiosities; some of them seem to have looked upon him as rather eccentric.

"In his habit of clothing," writes his friend Whitefoot, "he had an aversion to all finery, and affected plainness, both in the fashion and ornaments. He ever wore a cloke, or boots, when few others did. He kept himself very warm, and thought it most safe to do so."

His letters prove that although he was much resorted to as a physician by the wealthy and distinguished folk of Norwich and Norfolk, he did not neglect even the poorest of his patients, some of whom were regularly relieved by himself or some member of his family. It might have been written of him that—

> "he was kind, and loved to sit
> In the low hut or garnish'd cottage,
> And praise the farmer's homely wit,
> And share the widow's homelier pottage:
> At his approach complaint grew mild;
> And when his hand unbarr'd the shutter,
> The clammy lips of fever smiled
> The welcome which they could not utter."

Sir Thomas Browne died on October 19, 1682, the seventy-seventh anniversary of his birthday. The Rev. John Whitefoot tells us that—

"in his last sickness, wherein he continued about a week's time, enduring great pain of the colic, besides a continual fever, with as much patience as has been seen in any man, without any pretence of stoical antipathy, animosity, or vanity, or not being concerned thereat, or suffering no impeachment of happiness. His patience was founded upon the Christian Philosophy, and a sound Faith in God's Providence, and a meek and humble submission thereunto which he expressed in a few words. I visited him near his end, when he had not strength to hear or speak much; the last words which I heard from him were, besides some expressions of dearness, that he did freely submit to the will of God, being without fear."

He was buried in the chancel of St. Peter Mancroft Church, within a very short distance of the house in which he had dwelt during the greater part of his life in Norwich. The monument to his memory was erected by his wife, who died about three years later.

There is a disagreeable sequel to the story of Browne's life, which it is as well to summarize as briefly as possible, but which I would gladly omit from these pages if it were not for what has happened during the last few months.

In the "Gentleman's Magazine" we read:—

"In August, 1840, some workmen, who were employed in digging a vault in the chancel of the Church of St. Peter Mancroft, accidentally broke with a blow of the pickaxe the lid of a coffin, which proved to be that of one whose residence within its walls conferred

honour on Norwich in olden times. . . . The bones of the skeleton were found to be in good preservation, particularly those of the skull. The forehead was remarkably low and depressed, the head unusually long, the back part exhibiting an uncommon appearance of depth and capaciousness . . . the hair profuse and perfect, of a fine auburn colour, similar to that in the portrait presented to the institute in 1847, and which is carefully preserved in the vestry of St. Peter Mancroft. . . . Instead of restoring the remains to the grave the Sexton dishonestly appropriated the Skull and hair, which he offered for sale, and they were purchased by a Dr. Lubbock, in whose collection they remained until the year 1847, when they were presented to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, where they are now to be seen. It is said that Sir Thomas Browne's skull is exhibited with the remains of Malefactors who were executed in front of Norwich Castle. There is a strong feeling, which every lover of Sir Thomas Browne will sympathize with, that these remains should be restored to his grave; and it is earnestly hoped that the Hospital will see their way to so restoring them."

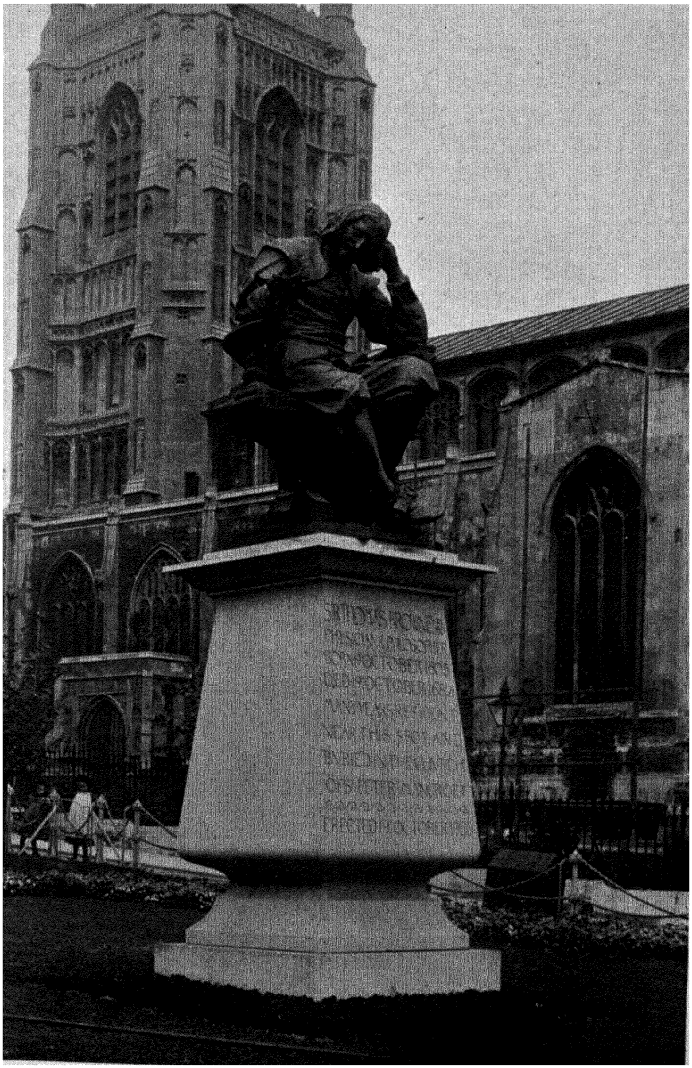
At the time when the skull was stolen, the coffin-plate was also detached from the coffin: it is now in the church vestry and bears an inscription in Latin, of which the following is the generally accepted English version :—

"A very distinguished man, Sir Thomas Browne, Kt., doctor of medicine, aged 77 years, who died on the 19th of October, 1682, sleeps in this coffin of lead. By the dust of his alchemic body he transmutes it into a coffer of gold."

From time to time after the placing of the skull in the Hospital Museum, it was suggested that it

should be returned to the desecrated grave; but no definite step towards accomplishing this was taken until April, 1906, when, as a result of the tercentenary celebration of Browne's birthday (in the course of which the fine statue on the Haymarket, the work of Mr. Henry Pegram, was unveiled by Lord Avebury), the Governors of the Hospital agreed to hand over the skull to the vicar of St. Peter Mancroft, provided that the coffin be reopened to ascertain whether or not it had really been disturbed. The announcement of this offer gave rise to some discussion, and a repetition of doubts previously expressed as to the genuineness of the skull, it being pointed out that its history after its alleged abstraction from the coffin was not very clear, and that the evidence upon which it had been accepted by the Hospital authorities was not such as to carry absolute conviction. In addition to this, the vicar and churchwardens of St. Peter Mancroft state that the Church cannot afford the expense of making research beneath the chancel (the exact position of the tomb being unknown), and they suggest that as the Hospital authorities admit that the skull was stolen, the Hospital should pay the cost of its being restored to the tomb. Of this there seems to be no immediate prospect, and it is probable that, unless some one comes forward to defray the cost of opening and closing the tomb, the skull will remain in the Hospital Museum.

A little more than five and twenty years before his death, Sir Thomas Browne was in attendance at the death-bed of his most distinguished literary contemporary in the city of Norwich. This was Bishop



STATUE OF SIR THOMAS BROWNE, HAYMARKET, NORWICH

Joseph Hall, the satirist, who on his release from the Tower of London—to which, with Archbishop Williams and ten other bishops, he had been committed, at the instigation of implacable Puritans, on a charge of high treason—had come to Norwich to take charge of a diocese noted at the time for its Puritanism. He arrived here in March, 1642, and was received, we are told, with more respect than might have been expected, and for about twelve months after taking possession of the old palace beside the Cathedral he enjoyed a peace to which he had been for a long time a stranger. But at the end of March, 1643, when the ordinance of sequestration was passed by the Parliament, he realised that there had been only a lull in the storm of civil and religious dissension. Early one morning, before he was out of bed, a London trooper with several attendants came hammering at the palace door, demanding entrance; and a few days later the sequestrators came to seize the palace and the bishop's estate, both real and personal. An inventory was taken, and it was only with difficulty that the sequestrators were persuaded to omit from it the wearing apparel of the prelate and his family; but before his books and goods could be put up to auction one or two friends came forward and purchased them for him at a valuation. In his "Hard Measure" he has left us a graphic account of his experiences at this time, in the course of which he says:

"Many insolencies and affronts were, in all this time, put upon us. One while a whole rabble of volunteers came to my gates late, when they were locked up, and called for the porter to give them entrance; which not

being yielded, they threatened to make by force; and, had not the said gates been very strong, they had done it. Others of them clambered over the walls, and would come into my house. Their errand, they said, was to search for delinquents; what they would have done I know not, had not we, by a secret way, sent to raise the officers for our rescue. Another while the Sheriff Toftes and Alderman Linsey, attended with many zealous followers, came into my chapel to look for superstitious pictures and relics of idolatry; and sent for me to let me know they found those windows full of images, which were very offensive and must be demolished. I told them they were the pictures of some ancient and worthy bishops, as St. Ambrose, Austin, etc. It was answered me that they were so many popes; and one younger man among the rest (Townsend, as I perceived afterwards) would take upon him to defend that every diocesan bishop was pope. I answered him with some scorn; and obtained leave that I might, with the least loss and defacing of the windows, give orders for taking off that offence; which I did, by causing the heads of the pictures to be taken off, since I knew the bodies could not offend."

How the zealous Puritans despoiled the cathedral is also related by the deprived bishop, who with his family was not long permitted to occupy the ransacked palace. Miles Corbet, the Puritan leader, was determined to eject him, and the local committee of Puritans were anxious to secure the use of the palace in order to hold their meetings there. So, although Mrs. Hall offered to pay the rent of the house then occupied by the committee, the bishop received notice to quit by Midsummer Day. On that day he and his family were rendered homeless, and, as he says, "we might have lain in the street for ought I know, had not the

providence of God so ordered it that a neighbour in the Close, one Mr. Gostlin, a widower, was content to void his house for us." There they appear to have remained until the autumn, when Hall hired a picturesque old flint and stone house still standing down by the riverside in suburban Heigham. In this house, now known as the Dolphin Inn, Hall spent the rest of his life, and was probably able to enjoy a more peaceful existence than he had known at any time since he was rector of the quiet Suffolk village of Hawstead, with no greater troubles than an atheistical neighbour and a parsimonious patron. For Heigham, in those days, was a far more rural retreat than it is to-day, and in his garden sloping down to the Wensum the ejected bishop could again turn his mind to meditations suggested by Nature and his beloved books.

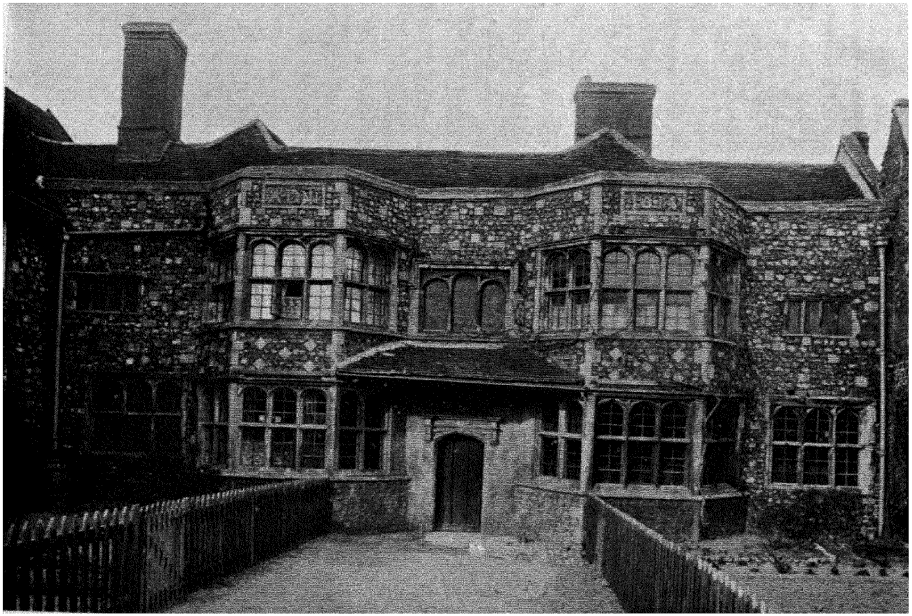
But he had always been a fighter, and he had not been long at Heigham before he again found himself engaged in theological strife; he had always been a writer, and even in his old age his pen was rarely idle, though he produced nothing during his latter years in which we can find such entertainment as his "toothless" and his "biting" satires afford. As his life drew to a close, the death of his wife and two of his children caused him to turn his thoughts more and more to a life beyond the grave and his pen to subjects pertaining to "The Invisible World;" while his sermons—for he still continued to preach in one or another of the city churches when his services were required—became more and more retrospective as he treated of "Life a Sojourning." So long as he was able, he ministered as faithfully in his reduced state as he had done as a

distinguished prelate. We are told that when he was confined to his bed by weakness he administered the rite of confirmation to such as desired it, and—

"after his prevailing infirmities had wasted all the strengths of nature, and the arts of his learned and excellent physician Dr. Browne of Norwich (to whom, under God, we and the whole church are ingaged for many years preserving his life as a blessing to us),—after his fatherly reception of many persons of honour, learning, and piety, who came to crave his dying prayers and benedictions,—he roused up his dying spirits, to a heavenly confession of his faith, which ere he could finish it, his speech was taken from him."

Hall, the "English Chrysostom," as one of his biographers calls him, died on September 8th, 1656, in the eighty-second year of his age. He was buried in the little church of St. Bartholomew, Heigham, where, on the south side of the chancel, there is a rather gruesome monument to him, consisting, in addition to the inscription, of a gilt and inlaid skeleton. His funeral sermon was preached in the church of St. Peter Mancroft, by the Rev. John Whitefoot, who twenty-six years later delivered that of Sir Thomas Browne. The sermon was subsequently printed and dedicated to the deceased bishop's eldest son. Appended to it are some curious lines, which include the following :—

"Maugre the peevish world's complaint,
Here lies a bishop and a saint,
Whom Ashby bred, and Granta nursed
When Halstead (Hawsted), and Old Waltham first
To rouz the stupid world from sloth,
Heard thund'ring with a golden mouth ;



BISHOP HALL'S PALACE
NOW THE DOLPHIN INN

Whom Worcester next doth dignifie,
And honoured with her deanery :
Whom Exon lent a mitred wreath,
And Norwich where he ceased to breathe.

These all with one joint voice do cry,
Death's vain attempt, what doth it mean?
My Son, my Pupil, Pastor, Dean,
My rev'rend Father cannot die."

CHAPTER IX

LOWESTOFT

Thomas Nash—Edward FitzGerald—His affection for fishermen—His fishermen friends—Seashore lore—Professor Cowell and FitzGerald—Cowell visits Borrow—Joseph Fletcher ("Posh")—John FitzGerald—Edward FitzGerald at sixty—The Arnolds—Mrs. Opie—Thomas Scroope—William Whiston—John Tanner—Robert Potter.

PERHAPS the earliest claim Lowestoft can advance to have some connection with literature rests upon the fact of Thomas Nash, the satirist and author of "Pierce Pennilesse," having been born here in the year 1564. Whether the town has much reason to be proud of having been the birthplace of such a man is a moot point; for Nash, we are told, spent much of his life in profligacy, and a considerable portion of it in gaol; while some idea of the character of his writings may be gained from a knowledge of his having, in a pamphlet entitled "Christ's Tears over Jerusalem," expressed contrition for them shortly before he died. But Nash was undoubtedly, as Isaac D'Israeli has said, a creature of genius as well as of famine and despair; and if his railings and biting satires have too much venom in them to commend them even to his greatest admirers, it must not be forgotten that his life had far more of the bitter than the sweet in it, and that his

work, brilliant as it often was, and received with high praise, brought him no tangible reward. When he came to write a retrospect of his literary life, he said he had—

"sat up late and rose early, contended with the cold, and conversed with scarcitie." "All my labours," he added, "turned to losse,—I was despised and neglected, my pains not regarded, or slightly rewarded, and I myself, in prime of my best wit, laid open to povertie. . . . How many base men that wanted those parts I had, enjoyed content at will, and had wealth to command? I called to mind a cobbler that was worth five hundred pounds; an hostler that had built a goodly inn; a carman in a leather pilche that had whipt a thousand pounds out of his horse's tail—and have I more than these? thought I to myself. . . . How am I crost, or whence is this curse? Even from hence, the men that should employ such as I am, are enamoured of their own wits, though they be never so scurvie; that a scrivener is better paid than a scholar; and men of art must seek to live among cormorants, or be kept under by dunces, who count it policy to keep them bare to follow their books the better."

And then he breaks out:—

"Ah worthless wit, to train me to this woe!
Deceitful hearts that nourish discontent!
Ill thrive the folly that bewitch'd me so!
Vain thoughts, adieu! for now I will repent;
And yet my wants persuade me to proceed,
Since none take pity of a scholar's need."

But of Nash's life in Lowestoft we know nothing, though he himself wished it to be "known to all men" that he was born here; so, as the town can boast of associations of which it has good reason to be proud, no

one is likely to complain if, having made this brief reference to the unfortunate satirist, I hasten on to trace along the Lowestoft shore the footprints of Edward FitzGerald.

Very few years have passed since the figure of Edward FitzGerald was familiar to frequenters of the Lowestoft streets; but during those years changes have taken place in "our ugly Lowestoft," as he called it, which he would have been the last to say are for the better. When he first knew it, it was far from arriving at the dignity of a corporation and a borough bench; as its suburb, Kirkley can scarcely be said to have existed; and, in the place of the Suffolk Hotel there was an old-fashioned hostelry on the London and Yarmouth coach road, with a "wooded pleasaunce" in front of it where "the daffodil and the violet grew wild." This was in the days before the railway came; but, as time went on, and the popularity of the town as a watering-place grew, it became less and less to his liking. Still, he had grown accustomed to it, and he loved the sea and the fishermen, and to listen to and ponder over the latter's quaint words and sayings. "Somehow," he wrote, "I always feel at home here." During his early visits, when he often came here by sea in his little yacht, the *Scandal*, he was especially fond of the North Beach and its quaint old colony of beachmen's cottages, net-chambers, and curing-sheds; there he would chat with the fishermen who were mending their nets, with the men of the beach companies—from whose sheds or "courts" he was watched curiously as he wandered along the shore—and with the twine-spinners, who, with the knots of hempen fibre belted to their waists,

worked their way up and down the ancient rope-walks.

His fishermen-friends were numerous, and he knew them all by their nicknames. In his letters they were "Lew" Colby, "Dickymilk" Colby, and "Old Brawtoe"; and nothing pleased him much better than jotting down their strange nautical terms and quaint colloquialisms. Of these he contributed a lengthy list to "The East Anglian."[1]

"Picked up idly," he says, "with little care how or whence they came to hand, I doubt they will make a sorry show in your grave pages, whether as regards quantity or quality. They may, however, amuse some of your readers, and perhaps interest others in guessing at their history. On the whole, I think if you print them, it must be in some Christmas number, a season when even antiquaries grow young, scholars unbend, and grave men are content to let others trifle. Even 'Notes and Queries,' with all the scholars that Bruce so long has led, sometimes smile, sometimes doze, and usually gossip about what it is now the fashion to call Folk-lore (of which I send you some also) at Christmas. . . . P.S.—I add a little incidental gossip at the end, in order to make up one number all of a piece, if you think your subscribers won't drop off in consequence."

Not the least interesting portions of this list are FitzGerald's disconnected notes, of which the following may be taken as an example:—

"HORRYWAUR. Fifty pounds to the philologer who will guess this riddle without looking to the end for its solution. When first I knew Lowestoft, some forty years ago, the herring luggers (which then lay up

[1] Vol. iii. pp. 347–358.

on the beach, when not at sea), very many of them, bore testimony to Wesley's visits to the place, and his influence on the people. Besides the common family and familiar names, such as William, Sarah Jane, Two Friends, Brothers, and such like, there were the Ebenezer, Barzillai, Salem, and many more Old Testament names, besides the Faith, Hope, Charity, etc., from later Revelation. A few vessels bore names in profane story—such as the Shannon (which, by-the-bye, still *reigns*) after Sir Philip Broke's victory; there was even a William Tell (no longer reigning), whose effigies, drest in an English sailor's white ducks and blue jacket, pointed at the wind with a pistol from the mast-head. *That* was about the furthest reach of legendary and historical lore. But *now* the schoolmaster has been at sea, as well as abroad, and gone herring-driving. Bless me! there's now a 'Nil Desperandum,' a 'Dum Spiro Spero,' and last, not least, a 'Meum and Tuum'; though in the latter case it was very properly represented to the owners that the phrase being Latin, should properly run 'Meum et Tuum.' Then even the detested 'Parley-vous' has come into request; and you may hear of a 'scrunk' of luggers very gravely enumerated in such order as the following. 'Let me see—there was the Young William, the Chanticleer, the Quee Vive (Qui Vive), the Saucy Polly, the Hosanna, and the Horry-waur.' Of the latter I could get no explanation, until one day it flashed upon me when I saw sailing out among the fleet, the 'Au Revoir,' belonging to a very good fellow who (according to the custom of nicknames hereabout) goes, as I believe his father went before him, under the name of 'Dicky-milk.'"

In the days when FitzGerald came here as a change from the thatched cottage at Boulge, he once, at least, had with him his greatest friend, William Kenworthy Browne, whom Mr. Thomas Wright has shown to have

been the original of Thackeray's hero in "Pendennis." In later years he had here the loved companionship of Professor Cowell, who usually stayed at a house on the Esplanade. There they read "Don Quixote" together; but sometimes they went botanizing, a pastime Cowell had taken up because he had been recommended more walking, but in which he soon found himself greatly interested. Cowell was anxious to find the Roman nettle, which formerly grew around the fishermen's buildings on the North Beach; but it had long been extinct when he first came here. But he found other rare plants, in which he rejoiced, as FitzGerald said, "like the great Boy he is." One day Cowell went, with an introduction from his friend, to see Borrow, whom he found to be "hard of hearing and shut up in a stuffy room, but cordial enough"; it was his "Wild Wales," Cowell told him, that had first inspired in him a thirst for the Welsh language. After FitzGerald's death, Cowell still continued to visit Lowestoft, chiefly because the air proved beneficial to his ailing wife; and in proof of his mind not being entirely occupied with Oriental literature and botany, we have the assertion of his niece that during one of his walks he told her the plot of the whole of Wilkie Collins' "Moonstone." He was here in September, 1892, preparing himself for the Oriental Congress to be held in London during the second week of that month; and directly the Congress was over he was back again with plans for visiting Norwich Cathedral and Bramerton Crag Pit—archæology and field geology having been added to his outdoor interests. Two years later he wrote here some of his botanical sonnets, and one day, accompanied by

Dr. Venn and Dr. Dyson, one of the Law Professors at Oxford, he went to Southwold, afterwards walking to Dunwich to see the ruins of that sea-wasted town. In the following year he was here again, chiefly occupied with sonnet-writing, but finding time to pay two visits to the great Roman camp at Burgh Castle; while a year later his best companion here was the Greville "Memoirs," which in his opinion only lacked humour to be a first-class book. Every year he did some botanizing, and having satisfied himself that the Roman nettle was really extinct, he wrote: "I daresay a nettle's absence was never mourned before." On the day after his return home from a visit to Lowestoft in the autumn of 1899, his wife died, and ere four years had elapsed he was laid beside her in the churchyard at Bramford, in Suffolk, near the little house in which were spent the first three years of their married life.

It was in 1864 that FitzGerald made the acquaintance of Joseph Fletcher, his beloved "Posh," whom he described as "a man of the finest Saxon type, with a complexion *vif, mâle et flamboyant*, blue eyes, a nose less than Roman, more than Greek, and strictly auburn hair that any woman might sigh to possess," and further, "a man of simplicity of soul, justice of thought, tenderness of nature, a gentleman of nature's grandest type." In a very short time his admiration of the sayings and doings of this burly fisherman had increased so unreasonably that nothing would convince him that his idol was not the "greatest man he had ever met"; yet that idol had feet of clay, and Fletcher, who was not infrequently made to appear ridiculous by his admirer's jealous attentions, would be the first to admit

that no one could have been more strangely blind to his failings. FitzGerald's letters will always delight readers for whom his personality has an appeal, and as time goes on, and the biographies of FitzGerald become more widely read, the subtle charm of those letters will undoubtedly captivate a wider circle of leisurely readers; but if any of them are ever acknowledged to be wearisome, it will be those in which he sets down the commonplace utterances of "Posh," and finds innumerable excuses for his shortcomings. The friendship between the two very different men must necessarily have been one-sided, and the space devoted to it by several writers who have dealt with FitzGerald's life in Lowestoft is largely wasted, except in that it contains matter which goes a long way towards proving his own assertion that "we FitzGeralds are all mad." Of both FitzGerald and Borrow it may be said that their objections to ordinary conventionalities were so great that to escape having to conform to those conventionalities they often sought the companionship of rough and simple souls, and, perhaps unconsciously, excused the indulgence of their own weaknesses and foibles by exaggerating the good qualities and homely wisdom of their humble friends. But although both FitzGerald and Borrow were so similarly disposed to enjoy the luxury of a "simple life," they never became friends nor sought each other's company. Had they done so, each might have had his eyes opened a little wider, and have been the better for it.

During his visits to Lowestoft, FitzGerald nearly always stayed at one or another of the two southernmost houses (Nos. 11 and 12) of Marine Terrace, a row

standing a little way back from the east side of London Road; but one associates him with the cliffs—on which Henry Irving (whom FitzGerald did *not* admire) afterwards studied his part in *Ravenswood*—the beach, the harbour jetties, and the fishermen's quarters rather than with the lodging-houses at which he stayed. He loved the sea, and was never happier than when on or beside it; but he hated the "respectable" South Lowestoft, and it was only when Cowell or some other friend was staying there that he could be persuaded to cross the harbour bridge. On the rare occasions when he wandered beyond the bounds of the town, it was to Yarmouth or one of the neighbouring coast villages, and usually he took Fletcher with him, for it pleased him to hear his fisherman-friend discourse, and especially argue, with other salt-water folk. All his life FitzGerald preferred the outside of a church to the inside; but this did not prevent his frequently attending the old "Bethel" in Commercial Road, where the fishermen's missionary, Mr. William Johnson—still well remembered for his good work and sympathetic heart—kept the wooden benches "well filled with sailors in their guernseys, who chewed tobacco during prayers and even kept quids in their cheeks whilst they sang." Sometimes FitzGerald's eccentric brother John preached in the Bethel; but on these occasions Edward was invariably absent. As one of his intimate friends said, "He was rather hard on parsons," and he reckoned his brother among them.

FitzGerald could constantly find a source of amusement in the eccentricities of his brother John, as well as in those of other friends and acquaintances; but his own were equally marked; indeed, so strange was his

behaviour at times, especially in the days when "Posh" was his idol, that strangers sometimes looked upon him as a madman and "Posh" as his keeper. But for all that his was so attractive and loveable a nature that even the commonplace terrace in which he lived whilst at Lowestoft seems to those who knew him, and those who love him without having known him, worth a pilgrimage to see. As one follows in his steps through the little-changed streets of the beachmen's quarter, or along the Denes, where the fishermen still dry their nets, one feels that he has conferred an enviable distinction on the town, and that the fact of his having chosen to spend so much of his time here should always be among its cherished memories. A pen-portrait of him as he was at sixty has been drawn by Mr. Thomas Wright—

"FitzGerald was above the medium height, but at sixty, though still robust and nimble, had begun to stoop. His face, bronzed by exposure to sun and sea air, had a melancholy, pensive, or dreamy cast; he had pale blue eyes, bushy brows, a large nose, a deep upper lip, a firmly closed mouth, and a dimple in the chin. Save for a fringe of grey hair above the ears he was bald, and 'like all the FitzGeralds,' he 'wagged his head as he walked.' His appearance, as ever, was very slovenly. Abroad he wore a time-beaten tall hat, carried on the back of his head, a carelessly tied black scarf round his neck, and in cold weather a large green and black plaid shawl, which often trailed on the ground."

The wraith of that pensive figure still seems to haunt the Lowestoft shore.

Before visiting Oulton, where George Borrow lived and died, we must briefly touch upon a few other literary

associations of the easternmost town in England. There is a large old red-brick house—now a boarding-house—near the top of High Street, which has some claim on our attention, for it was for a long time the home of a branch of the family to which belonged a famous Master of Rugby and his more famous son, Matthew Arnold; but the most distinguished of the Lowestoft Arnolds was a fighting sea-captain, who captured a Spanish flag-ship and brought home its flag, which many people still living in the town can remember to have seen flying from a window of the High Street house. A little way beyond this house, at the foot of the old cliff-slope beyond the High Lighthouse, in a small but pretty public garden called the Sparrow's Nest, stands the old home of the Aldersons, a family to which belonged Mrs. Opie, the novelist, and a Miss Alderson who became the wife of the late Marquis of Salisbury. Mrs. Opie, whose grandfather was a minister here, occasionally stayed in the town, and was here a short time before her death; but she belonged to the distinguished literary and artistic circle which flourished in Norwich in the early years of the last century rather than to Lowestoft.

As we ramble out of Lowestoft towards the haunts of George Borrow, the parish church attracts attention more by its position than by anything remarkable in itself; for it stands some distance from the town, and on the highest ground in the neighbourhood. It is worth while to turn aside from the Oulton road for a while and visit the church, for it is not without such associations as we are seeking, one of which carries us back as far as the fifteenth century. In the chancel was interred Thomas Scroope, Bishop of Dromore, who

died at Lowestoft in 1491 ; formerly there was a brass to his memory, but it has long disappeared. This ancient worthy, who was for a time vicar of the parish, is said to have been a member of the ancient Yorkshire family of Scroope, and in the course of his life he was connected with no less than three monastic orders, being first a Benedictine, then a Dominican, and finally a Carmelite of Norwich. According to Fuller, he wrote, while at Norwich, a learned treatise on the order he finally adhered to, and also preached in various parts of the neighbourhood, "clothed in hair and sackcloth, and girt with an iron chain." Then he retired to a cell in his monastery and became a recluse for twenty years ; at the end of which time he was made Bishop of Dromore and sent by Pope Eugenius on an embassy to the Isle of Rhodes. Of his journey thither he wrote a lengthy account. On returning to Ireland he gave up his bishopric and came to Lowestoft, where he died at the age of nearly a hundred years.

Rather more than two centuries later there was instituted to the vicarage of Lowestoft a more celebrated man in William Whiston, who four years later succeeded Sir Isaac Newton in his professorship at Cambridge. Whiston is best known as the author of "Primitive Christianity Revived"; but he was a voluminous writer on ecclesiastical history, mathematics, astronomy, and mysticism. Sir Leslie Stephen writes of him as a man of "very acute but ill-balanced intellect," whose "learning was very great, however fanciful his theories," and compares him with the Vicar of Wakefield, "who adopted his principles of monogamy." He was a strenuous participator in

religious strife, with the result that he was expelled from his University and the Church for Arianism; he mixed with the leading men of his time, and many tales, some of doubtful authenticity, are told of him. When Prince Eugene came to London, Whiston printed a new dedication to his essay on the Apocalypse, and pointed out that the prince had fulfilled some of the prophecies. In acknowledging this, the prince remarked that he had not been aware that he "had the honour of being known to St. John," but at the same time he sent Whiston fifteen guineas. Once, when he was in the company of Walpole, Pope, Addison, Craggs and others, the conversation turned on the possibility of a secretary of state being an honest man. After some pressing, Whiston gave it as his opinion that it would be to the advantage of a statesman to speak openly what he knew and to declare his intentions without disguise. Craggs remarked that "It might answer for a fortnight, but would not do for a month," to which Whiston returned, "Did you ever, Mr. Secretary, try it for a fortnight?"

A subsequent vicar was John Tanner, who completed and published while at Lowestoft the "Notitia Monastica" of his brother Thomas, Bishop of St. Asaph. He died in December, 1759; but less than thirty years had elapsed before the vicarage of Lowestoft was filled by another and more famous scholar in Robert Potter, whose translation of Æschylus was described by Beattie as "the best translation that ever appeared in English of any Greek poet." Potter, who is said to have been "a tall man, about six feet high, very handsome, and with an aquiline nose," and a

man of "great merit, small preferment, and large family," died at Lowestoft in 1804, and a tomb erected to his memory was formerly to be seen outside the north side of the church chancel, but its site is now occupied by the priests' vestry. His translation of Æschylus is still considered the best, and is included in Mr. Morley's Universal Library and Lord Avebury's Hundred Best Books. Soon after his death an obituary notice appeared, in which it was stated that—

"Mr. Potter has long been known to the literary world as the translator of the three great writers Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides) of the Greek Drama: of all the translations in our language, this undoubtedly possesses a superior claim to excellence; not merely from the felicity with which it has been executed, but from the singular fidelity by which the genius and manner of the respective writers are presented to us. When we further consider the magnitude of the undertaking, and that it was the work of one man, we cannot but rank Mr. Potter—not to mention his original publications—among those to whom British literature is especially indebted."

CHAPTER X

GEORGE BORROW AT OULTON

Normanston Manor House—Frederick Denison Maurice—Tennyson's verses to Maurice—Crabbe at Normanston—John Wesley—Oulton Broad—Borrow's Oulton home—The Skeppars—Borrow's marriage with Mary Clarke—Life at Oulton Cottage—"The Zincali"—"The Bible in Spain"—"Lavengro"—Borrow and his critics—Borrow wishes to be a magistrate—His dispute with the rector of Oulton—"Epistolary pyrotechnics"—"Mr. Flamson"—Death of Borrow's mother—Borrow removes to London—Returns to Oulton—Correspondence with FitzGerald—Borrow's irritability—"Tells his age to no man!"—His death—His summer-house by the Broad—Isopel Berners—Oulton Church—Mrs. McOubrey.

ON leaving the churchyard—which was often visited by FitzGerald when in his more melancholy moods—the Beccles road, which runs beside the newer cemetery and crosses the Lowestoft and Gorleston railway, soon brings us to the old Normanston manor-house, which stands near the end of a by-road called Fir Lane and a small piece of waste ground, formerly a camping ground of the roving Romanies. The house is a fairly old one of well-weathered red brick, but a wall hides most of it from a foot-traveller along the road, and it can be seen best from a footpath between Lowestoft and Oulton Broad by way of Lake Lothing. This house should interest us as being the birthplace, in 1805, of



NORMANSTON MANOR-HOUSE

THE BIRTHPLACE OF FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE AND A RESORT OF THE POET CRABBE

Frederick Denison Maurice, the "Christian Socialist," and friend of Tennyson, Carlyle, and Charles Kingsley. Only a few years of his boyhood were spent here, and the biography written by his son has little to say about his Normanston home; but when he went to Cambridge he soon distinguished himself as an "intellectual leader among his ablest contemporaries," and in later years, when his championship of the cause of the Chartists and Radicals led him into trouble, and caused him to be charged with "atheism and immoral revolutionary doctrines," the support and sympathy he received from some of the greatest men of his time were a sufficient testimony to his sterling worth and honesty. Sir Leslie Stephen has written of him—

"His catholic interest in all religious beliefs, and sympathetic appreciation of their value, seemed to imply an excessive intellectual ingenuity in reconciling apparent contradictions. The effort to avoid a harsh dogmatic outline gives an indistinctness to his style, if not his thought, and explains why some people held him, as he says himself, to be a 'muddy mystic.' . . . But no fair reader can doubt that he was a man of most generous nature, of wide sympathies, and of great insight and subtilty of thought, and possessed a wide learning."

FitzGerald, who once heard him preach, said of him, "Maurice seems to say in his demeanour, 'You may trample on my body, I lay it on the road for you to walk over;'" but while he was always ready to sacrifice himself, he would never abandon the path he believed to be the right one. His early experiences as a writer and editor were not encouraging, though he was hopeful

enough to believe that a novel[1] he was writing would bring him in money enough to pay his expenses when he took orders and went to Oxford; but his "Sketches of Contemporary Authors" were among the earliest important articles contributed to the "Athenæum." Tennyson was one of his greatest admirers, and when Maurice was compelled to resign his professorship of English Literature and History at King's College, London, he received from the poet the invitation contained in those charming verses—

"Come, when no graver cares employ,
Godfather, come and see your boy:
Your presence will be sun in winter,
Making the little one leap for joy.

"For, being of that honest few,
Who give the Fiend himself his due,
Should eighty-thousand college councils
Thunder 'Anathema,' friend, at you;

[1] The title of this novel is "Eustace Conway." A capable critic spoke of it with "very high and almost unmingled admiration," but a candid friend of the author said to him, "Why, Maurice, how on earth did *you* ever come to write such a thing as this? Why, there is not a man in the whole book that I shouldn't like to have the hanging of." If there be any justification for this latter criticism, it is hardly surprising that Captain Marryat, the novelist, should have been much annoyed at finding that one of the characters, who was represented in a way by no means flattering to him, bore his own name. As the novel was issued anonymously, Captain Marryat called on its publisher, Mr. Richard Bentley, and "full of ire," made him pledge his word to write to the author and ask him whether he (the gallant captain) was referred to or the use of his name was purely accidental.

"Should all our churchmen foam in spite
At you, so careful of the right,
Yet one lay-hearth would give you welcome
(Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight.

"Where, far from noise and smoke of town
I watch the twilight falling brown
All round a careless-order'd garden
Close to the ridge of a noble down.

* * * * *

"Come, Maurice, come: the lawn as yet
Is hoar with rime, or spongy-wet;
But when the wreath of March has blossom'd,
Crocus, anemone, violet,

"Or later, pay one visit here,
For those are few we hold as dear;
Nor pay but one, but come for many,
Many and many a happy year."

Before taking leave of Normanston, it must not be forgotten that the old house is also associated with the poet Crabbe.

In the year 1790, Crabbe, who was then residing at Muston, paid a lengthy visit to his native county, spending some time at Parham, and then going on to Beccles to stay for a while with Mrs. Elmy, his wife's mother. He was accompanied by his wife and family, and his son and biographer tells us that from Beccles they proceeded to

'a sweet little villa called Normanston, another of the early resorts of my mother and her lover, in the days of their anxious affection. Here four or five spinsters of independent fortune had formed a sort of Protestant nunnery, the abbess being Miss Blacknell, who afterwards deserted it to become the wife of the late Admiral Sir Thomas Graves. . . . Another of the sisterhood was

Miss Waldron, late of Tamworth,—dear, good-humoured, hearty, masculine Miss Waldron, who could sing a jovial song like a fox-hunter, and like him I had almost said toss a glass; and yet there was such an air of high *ton*, and such intellect mingled with these manners, that the perfect lady was not veiled for a moment,—no, not when, with a face rosy red, and an eye beaming with mirth, she would seize a cup and sing 'Toby Fillpot,' glorying as it were in her own jollity. When we took our morning rides, she generally drove my father in her phaeton, and interested him exceedingly by her strong understanding and conversational powers."

While at Normanston, the Rev. George Crabbe made frequent driving excursions in company with these interesting ladies, generally in the direction of Lowestoft, where, one evening, they all went to hear John Wesley preach. Wesley by that time was old and infirm, and had to be attended, and almost supported, in the pulpit by a young minister on each side of him. In the course of his sermon he repeated the following familiar lines from Anacreon, to which he gave an application of his own—

"Oft am I by women told,
Poor Anacreon! thou grow'st old;
See, thine hairs are falling all,
Poor Anacreon! how they fall!
Whether I grow old or no,
By these signs I do not know;
But this I need not to be told
'Tis time to *live* if I grow old."

"My father," writes Crabbe's son, "was much struck by his reverend appearance and his cheerful air, and the beautiful cadence he gave to these lines; and, after the service, introduced himself to the patriarch, who received him with benevolent politeness."

Before leaving Normanston, Crabbe wrote some verses for the fascinating ladies who had their home here, and called them "The Ladies of the Lake."

Within a few minutes' walk of Normanston are Oulton Broad station and the by-road leading to Oulton Church and the site of Borrow's home beside the Broad. He would hardly recognize the road now, so changed is it from the quiet winding lane he knew; on one side it is bordered by a building estate which is rapidly being covered with commonplace cottages, while towards the once-beautiful Broad the view is spoiled by huge and unsightly malthouses. Nor is the evidence of Oulton having become an urban district entirely absent until the upland edge is reached and the marshlands are seen stretching away down the Waveney Valley in all their pristine spaciousness and soothing monotony. But before the marshes come into view, there is one short stretch of by-road still bordered by its old tall trees, and it is just where this stretch begins that a new road branches off, taking the place of the rough pathway which led to Borrow's home. The new road leads to a colony of modern houses and villas, nearly all of which have been built since Borrow died, and one of which, just beyond the railway bridge, stands on the site of that Oulton Cottage in which he lived from 1840 to 1853, and to which he returned in 1874, to spend his declining years in almost complete seclusion.

How it was that Borrow came to live here is fully explained by Dr. Knapp in his biography. He appears to have made the acquaintance of Mr. Edmund Skeppar, who lived at Oulton Hall, about the year 1832, in which year he was at Lowestoft as the guest of the Rev.

Francis Cunningham, who had married one of the Gurneys, a sister of the celebrated Elizabeth Fry. At that time Mr. Skeppar had been in occupation of the Hall since 1805, and his daughter, Mary Clarke, who had been left a widow after a married life of only eight months, was, with her little daughter, Henrietta Mary—the "Henrietta" of "Wild Wales"—living with him. Mary Clarke and Borrow seem to have been attracted by each other, and when he went to Russia in the following year they commenced a regular correspondence. On his return to England, in 1835, he again visited Oulton; but soon after, at the request of the Bible Society, started for Spain and Portugal, with the object of making inquiries "respecting the means and channels which may offer for promoting the circulation of the Holy Scriptures." In 1838 he paid a brief visit to England, and was probably at Oulton again; but his next meeting with Mrs. Clarke and her daughter took place, whether by arrangement or "the manipulation of the invisible threads of human destiny," Dr. Knapp cannot decide, at Seville. The parents of Mrs. Clarke were by this time dead, and Dr. Knapp more than hints that she was tired of widowhood and determined to claim Borrow as her own.

"The Estate," the biographer writes, "demanded a living man of certain herculean proportions and a fierce countenance, to keep the foe at bay. Such a man was 'six-foot-three.' He was an athlete still. His Bible Society training had rendered him even more formidable. She had known him and helped him in the dark days of 1832, and since then she had kept a kindly eye on him. She had followed him to Gibraltar that she might be the first to welcome him back to Europe, or, lest he should

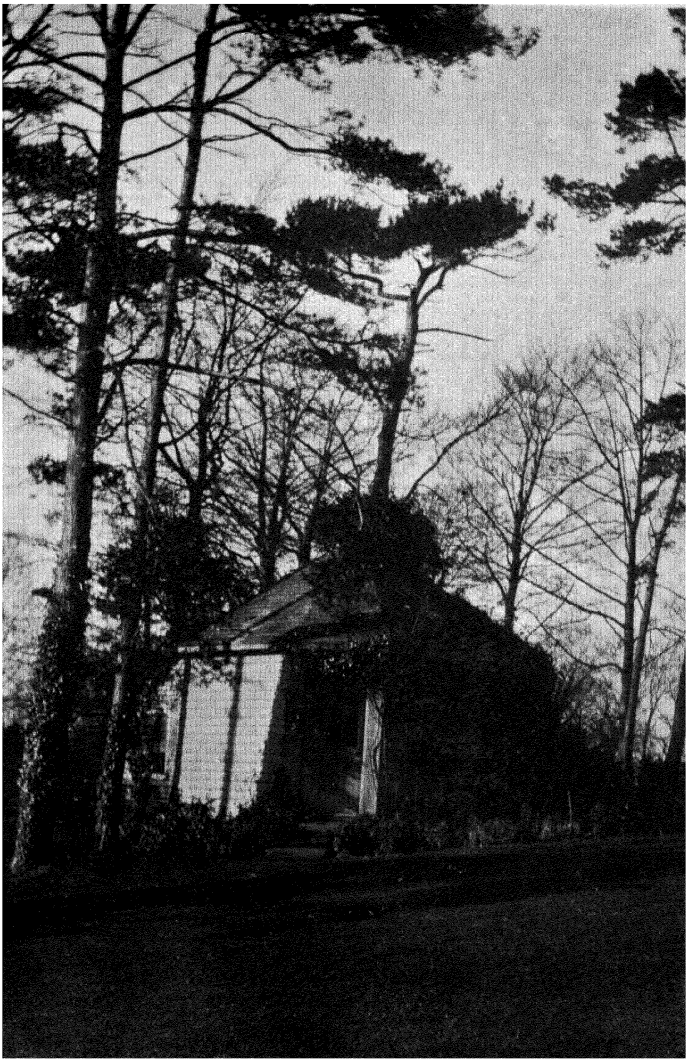
fall into the sea, and become a derelict for ships passing the Straits between Calpe and Abyla. It was all very kind, very kind; but Don Jorge was not a family man. He had allowed Isopel to depart for America, where there is room and bread for the active and the strong. He came nearer to invading his principles then, than had ever been the case before or since."

But in November, 1839, the die was cast. "At this time," wrote Arthur Dalrymple, one of Borrow's Norwich schoolfellows, "the widow . . . found him out, having travelled over half Europe in search of him, and took possession of him." The marriage took place at St. Peter's Church, Cornhill, on April 23rd, 1840, and early in the following month, Borrow, with his wife and step-daughter, took up their residence at Oulton.

Oulton Cottage was then a small isolated house standing close by the waterside, from which it was separated by a sloping lawn; it was well sheltered by trees, among them some rugged firs which the storms have not yet destroyed. The house consisted of a room on each side of the entrance, a kitchen, four bedrooms and two attics; but there was a large octagonal summer-house in the garden and into this Borrow removed his books and made it his study. There he finished his first original book, "The Zincali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain." Any value this dull book may have once possessed has long been heavily discounted by the publication of fuller and more accurate works, and if nothing better had ever proceeded from the picturesque little summer-house beside Oulton Broad, Borrow would by now be forgotten and the summer-house demolished. But he had scarcely seen "The Zincali" through the press, when he began to write "The Bible in Spain."

"At first," he says, "I proceeded slowly,—sickness was in the land, and the face of nature was overcast—heavy rain-clouds swam in the heavens,—the blast howled amid the pines which nearly surround my lonely dwelling, and the waters of the lake which lies before it, so quiet in general and tranquil, were fearfully agitated. . . . . A dreary summer and autumn passed by, and were succeeded by as gloomy a winter. I still proceeded with the Bible in Spain. The winter passed, and spring came with cold dry winds and occasional sunshine, whereupon I rose, shouted, and mounting my horse, even Sidi Habismilk, I scoured all the surrounding district, and thought but little of the Bible in Spain. So I rode about the country, over the heaths, and through the green lanes of my native land, occasionally visiting friends at a distance, and sometimes, for variety's sake, I staid at home and amused myself by catching huge pike, which lie perdue in certain deep ponds skirted with lofty reeds, upon my land, and to which there is a communication from the lagoon by a deep and narrow watercourse.—I had almost forgotten the Bible in Spain. Then came the summer with much heat and sunshine, and then I would lie for hours in the sun and recall the sunny days I had spent in Andalusia, and my thoughts were continually reverting to Spain, and at last I remembered that the Bible in Spain was still unfinished; whereupon I arose and said: This loitering profiteth nothing,—and I hastened to my summer-house by the side of the lake, and there I thought and wrote, and every day I repaired to the same place, and thought and wrote until I had finished the Bible in Spain."

"The Bible in Spain" had a cordial reception; but such was not the case with his next book, the delightful "Lavengro," which, notwithstanding that a good critic (Dr. Gordon Hake) said at once of it that its "roots



GEORGE BORROW'S SUMMER-HOUSE AT OULTON

will strike deep into the soil of English letters," hardly pleased more than that one reviewer. How Borrow dealt with his critics everyone knows who has read the Appendix to "The Romany Rye," where, in his pleasant little way, he holds "them up by their tails" and shows "the creatures wriggling, blood and foam streaming from their broken jaws." But while professing to disdain these "creatures," no one was more sensitive to criticism than Borrow—nothing, indeed, angered him more than being found fault with in any way, and it is his petty, almost childish, resentment of his critics' fault-finding which makes us treat that splenetic Appendix as though it were the squealing of a bad-tempered child. His diatribes against his "pseudo-critics," as he calls them, simply amuse us, and there was probably never a time when they did worse than cause a smile, and perhaps a roar of laughter, even where they were intended to inflict a painful wound.

For a man whose chief ambition whilst at Oulton seems to have been to become a magistrate so that he could adjudicate upon the delinquencies of his neighbours, Borrow certainly showed little evidence of possessing such a cool judgment as would commend him to the Lord Lieutenant of the county, and it is scarcely surprising that, notwithstanding all his efforts to secure the dignity of a Justice of the Peace, he was never permitted to adorn the local bench. So irritable was his disposition that FitzGerald once said of himself—or it was said of him—that he was the only friend Borrow had not at some time quarrelled with; and how trivial were some of the causes of his quarrels may be judged

from the facts of his dispute with the rector of Oulton about the frequent fights between their respective dogs, though in this instance the rector was far from showing a Christian disposition to be smitten on both cheeks. Threats of an appeal to the magistrates and a complaint to the Bishop were launched by the indignant Borrow against his clerical antagonist; but the warmth of the dispute did nothing worse than kindle what Dr. Knapp aptly calls "espistolary pyrotechnics." Borrow, in acknowledging a note from the rector, regretted that circumstances over which he had no control would occasionally bring him under the same roof with Mr. Denniss; "that roof, however," was "the roof of the House of God, and the prayers of the Church of England" were "wholesome from whatever mouth" they proceeded. A few days later, in a letter to his publisher, Mr. Murray, Borrow complained that he had been dreadfully unwell since he last heard from him; he had had, indeed, "a regular nervous attack!" Lady Eastlake, who met Borrow not long after this, described him as "a kind of character that would be most dangerous in rebellious times, one that would suffer or persecute to the uttermost"; but Lady Eastlake was probably mistaken. Borrow's bark was always worse than his bite; he was good-natured but bad-tempered, and always had a somewhat exaggerated idea of his own importance.

If he thought he had been injured in any way, he would pillory in print those whom he thought had wronged him, as witness his diatribe against "Mr. Flamson," in whom his biographer identifies the railway contractor who came to Lowestoft to improve the

harbour and construct a railway which happened to cross Borrow's estate. Not content with writing of this unfortunate man as though he were a monster glutting himself with the blood and enriching himself with the hard-earned money of the poor, he goes so far as to heap insults upon his wife, and again betrays his childish temper by scoffing at the style of the house, a "pandemonium in red brick," the contractor had built in the neighbourhood. In Oulton curious tales are still told of his vagaries—of his treatment of people who purposely or unwittingly trespassed upon his land or otherwise offended him ; of his antics around a bonfire of pirated copies of his works ; of his frightening children by glaring at them when he encountered them in his walks abroad ; and of his chasing, on horseback, some boys who had called after him some uncomplimentary name. To some of the poor folk of the parish he not infrequently showed kindness, but of the majority of his poorer neighbours he seems to have had a bad opinion. According to his own account, he was three times attacked at night whilst returning home from Lowestoft, and once was shot at and nearly overpowered by ruffians ; but these attacks, which curiously enough happened just about the time when he was desirous of being made a magistrate, and of which there appears to be no contemporary record save his own, were probably nothing worse than the raids of one or two poachers on his plantations. Of his Lowestoft neighbours he had an equally poor opinion. "Mind whom you trust in Lowestoft," he wrote to Mr. Murray, taking care to underline the words.

As an instance of Borrow's notorious brusqueness,

Mr. W. Willmot Dixon has recently told the following anecdote[1]:

"The coachman of Doctor Ray, of Lowestoft, had, in driving round a corner sharply, almost grazed the flank of the horse Borrow was riding—his favourite Sidi Habismilk. Borrow was furious, went straight to the doctor's house, rang the bell, and when the servant opened the door, to her astonishment and horror, without dismounting, he rode his horse into the hall, calling in stentorian tones for the doctor. When the latter appeared Borrow thundered out: 'Where is that scoundrel coachman of yours, sir? Do you know what he has done, sir?' 'Mr. Borrow,' said the doctor, quietly, but firmly, 'if you will be good enough to remove your horse from my hall and speak like a gentleman I shall be happy to attend to what you have to say.' I suppose Borrow felt that his conduct was outrageous, for he backed his horse out of the hall and went away without another word."

From 1853 to 1860, Borrow had his headquarters in Yarmouth, but spent much of his time in wandering about the country and paying visits to Cornwall, his father's native county, Wales, and the Isle of Man. In 1858, his mother, who about nine years before had removed from Norwich to Oulton, died, and was buried in Oulton churchyard. Two years later Borrow removed to London, where, save for journeys into Scotland and Ireland, he spent most of his time until 1874, when he returned to Oulton, as he said, to die. Apart from paying an occasional visit to Norwich, he now chose to live the life of a recluse. Once he sent an invitation to Edward FitzGerald to come and see him; but by that

[1] In *T. P.'s Weekly*, August 7th, 1903.

time the doors leading to most of FitzGerald's old haunts had been closed to him by the death of friends, and he was not to be persuaded to visit Oulton again. But in reply to the invitation he wrote:

"I think the more of it because I imagine from what I have heard that you have slunk away from human company as much—as I have! . . . Are you not glad now to be mainly alone, and find company a heavier burden than the grasshopper? If one ever had this solitary habit, it is not likely to alter for the better as one grows older—as one grows old. . . . Perhaps we should not like one another so well after a fifteen years' separation, when all of us change and most of us for the worse. I do not say *that* would be your case; but you must, at any rate, be less inclined to disturb the settled repose into which you, I suppose, have fallen."

And if few old friends or new acquaintances cared to call on Borrow it is hardly surprising; for those who did so could never be sure of a friendly reception. His irritability was still frequently manifested, and both friends and business folk found him difficult to talk to and deal with. One of his latest visitors, the rector of Lowestoft, happened to ask him how old he was, and he at once became very angry and exclaimed, "Sir, I tell my age to no man!" Then, in high dudgeon, he retired to his summer-house and wrote, in a very shaky hand, his last composition, which began with: "Never talk to people about their age." In 1879 he was unable to walk as far as the boundary of his small estate; in December, 1880, feeling that the end was not far off, he made his Will; and on the 26th July, 1881, he died. He was not buried at Oulton, but in Brompton

Cemetery, London, where, in compliance with his own instructions, he was interred beside his wife.

Oulton Cottage, his home beside the Broad, was pulled down not long after his death; but the ivy-clad summer-house in which "The Bible in Spain" was prepared for the press and "Lavengro" was written can still be seen by cruisers on the Broad, and overshadowing it are the same dark pines amid which the wind made mournful music while he sat in his lonely retreat and dreamt and wrote of his wandering life and the days he had spent in Sunny Spain. Here he was visited for the last time by Jasper Petulengro, his famous gipsy friend, whose acquaintance he had made many years before in the green lane near Norman Cross, and whose Romany friends, until a few years ago, frequently camped on the neighbouring building estate or the tract of waste ground bordering Fir Lane. With the gipsies Borrow appears to have always been on good terms, and who can doubt that in his latter years, when he had abandoned the road and free and careless foot-faring, his thoughts often went back to those days of aimless roving, when he had a part, and enjoyed to the full, the "romance of the road"? Who can wonder that among the practical and common-place folk with whom he cast in his lot when he settled down at Oulton he felt himself to be too angular to conform comfortably with their smooth and characterless self-complacency, and so grew discontented and irritable? Who can say what ghosts may not have haunted that little summer-house in the dusk of summer nights? Perhaps, out of the shadow of the distant Dingle the form of Isopel Berners may have emerged, and he may have heard her breathe again the

words "Our ways lie different," and have asked himself why it should have been so. And in the silence of the night may he not have bitterly regretted a day when he was blinded by youthful confidence and pride?

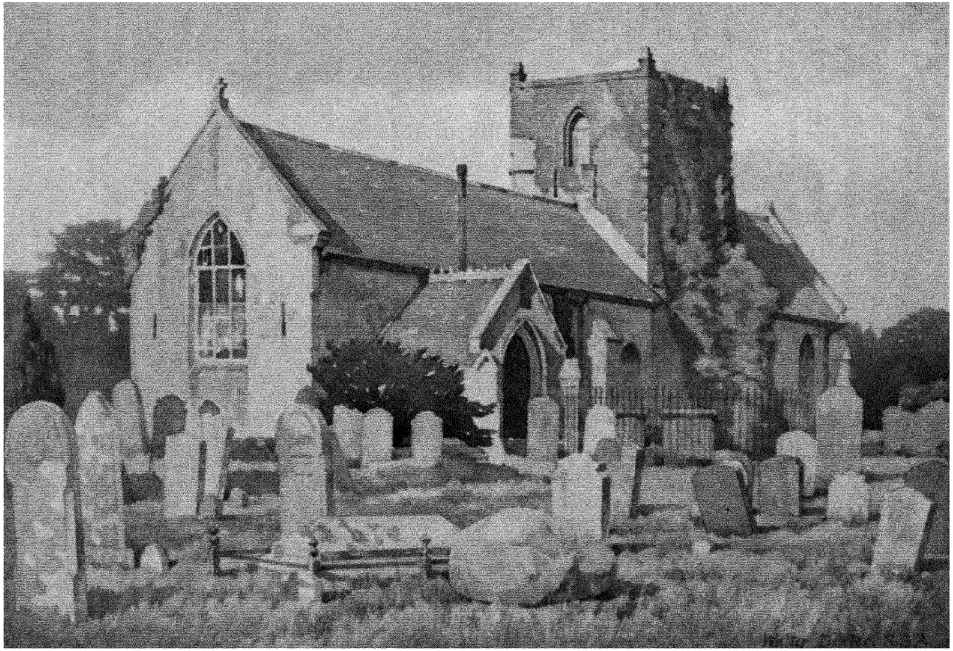
For it was pride and a too tender regard for what the world might say of him that prevented his throwing in his lot entirely with the roving folk who had so great a fascination for him. One who knew him as well as any one ever did, has told us that he was too proud ever to have married such a girl as Isopel, no matter how much he might be attracted by her; while Dr. Gordon Hake, who often met him during the Oulton days, says of him :—

"His temper was good and bad; his pride was humility; his humility was pride; his vanity, in being negative, was of the most positive kind. He was reticent and candid, measured in speech, with an emphasis that made trifles significant. Borrow was essentially hypochondriacal. Society he loved and hated alike. He loved it that he might be pointed out and talked of; he hated it because he was not the prince that he felt himself in its midst."

He was, in fact, one of the most self-conscious of men, and like a good many other self-conscious men, he tried to conceal his uneasiness when in cultured company, either by a loud self-assertiveness or a discourteous refusal to admit as worthy of consideration the opinions of such people as presumed to differ from him.

On the north side of the railway that runs through the estate which once belonged to Borrow, and not far from the gate of the garden in which the old summer-house and the fir trees are all that remain to remind us

of him, a field footpath skirts the grounds of Oulton Hall, the old home of the Skeppars, and leads directly to the parish church. On the way thither one gets glimpses of the wide marshland scenery in which Borrow so delighted, and with which all other scenery was, in his opinion, not worthy of comparison. The church, which stands on the summit of an upland slope leading down to the marsh level, has been much restored and modernized; but it still retains portions of an original Norman building in its chancel arch—which is one of the arches of a central tower—and its south doorway. Formerly the church had some fine brasses, but these mysteriously disappeared a good many years ago: some say they were stolen and thrown into the Broad, while others have heard rumours that they now adorn an American modern "baronial hall." At the present time the only brass in the church is a label, let into the floor near the chancel arch, to the memory of William Bedingfeld, who was instituted to the living in 1453, and held it for fifty years. The font is elaborately carved, and of fifteenth century date. Apart from the small brass, there is no memorial of any interest; but in the churchyard the tombs of the Skeppars and of Borrow's mother can easily be distinguished by their being mantled with ivy and the inscriptions rendered illegible by the grass and weeds which cover the slabs. Close beside them lies Mrs. Henrietta McOubrey, the step-daughter of Borrow, who died at Southtown, Great Yarmouth, a few years ago. On her tomb her relationship to Borrow is inscribed, together with the titles of his principal works; but during her life she was usually very reticent in respect to him, and when approached



OULTON CHURCH

by Dr. Knapp whilst he was engaged upon his "Life" of Borrow, she refused to have any communication with him, and was very indignant at the idea of any one wishing to discover the facts of Borrow's private life. It was, however, my privilege to have a chat with her about Borrow during the summer of 1895, when I found her very enthusiastic about him, and confident that his chief works have an abiding place in English literature. Among her cherished relics of his Oulton home were the chair in which he sat when writing in his summer-house and a fine portrait of him by Phillips. She had vivid recollections of her journey with Borrow into "Wild Wales"; also of the vigour with which he recited his own translations of some of the Norse and Danish poets. In the last letter I had from her she wrote:—

"I thank you much for sending the magazine. . . . I cannot think that Mr. Murray's review of my step-father is very correct; neither do my friends, some of whom have known him for years. We suppose the gentleman referred to is Dr. Whewell, of Cambridge celebrity; both himself and his wife were personal friends of ours, and used to visit us at Oulton, so these wars described by Mr. Murray were not very alarming. Then, respecting the Scotch dish called Haggis, it could not be new to him (Borrow), for in his boyhood he went to the High School at Edinburgh, and had often partaken of it in that country; besides, he could have it when he liked at his own table. My friends as well as myself consider it so very unlike George Borrow to enter people's houses by garden doors and ask what they have for dinner. All this I think rather amusing, for it shows that in these days, however silly, something must be written to make the people laugh. Mr. Borrow's mother was a very clever, delightful old lady, and lived

to a great age; she is buried at Oulton. Mr. Borrow and my mother rest in Brompton Cemetery, where I have caused a simple tomb to be erected to their beloved memory."

It is only in the summer-house beneath the firs and in this quiet churchyard on the border of the marshes that one now feels conscious of being in a way in touch with the spirit of the restless wanderer who, when life had nothing more for him, crept into this quiet corner of Suffolk to die. Amid the modern villas there is nothing to bring back to us that tall figure with the finely moulded head, thick white hair, and piercing brown eyes; but in the churchyard on the crest of the upland slope, silent save for the sighing of the wind among the trees and the wailing of the lapwing in the marshes, one can still see that solitary man who wandered far and found many things, but failed to find happiness or contentment.

CHAPTER XI

DICKENS' "BLUNDERSTONE" AND THOMAS GRAY

Blundeston — "David Copperfield" — Charles Dickens and "Blunderstone"—The Rookery—Blundeston Church—Blundeston Lodge—Rev. Norton Nicholls—Thomas Gray at Blundeston.

FROM Oulton Church it is a pleasant walk of about two miles or so to Blundeston, the "Blunderstone" of "David Copperfield"; and though visitors to David's birthplace usually drive or cycle to it from Lowestoft or Yarmouth, the rambler who has reached Oulton, and has a few hours to spare, can hardly do better than continue his rambling to Blundeston by the upland by-road bordering the valley of the Waveney. It is a pleasant road, for Oulton's urban growth has not yet extended beyond the neighbourhood of Borrow's old home; from Oulton Church onward the country is primitive and unspoilt, and as Blundeston is approached through Flixton, the only parish separating it from Oulton, there is one especially delightful spot where the road dips down between the grounds of Flixton Hall and Blundeston Lodge into a leafy hollow with woodlands on the one hand and some fine black poplars and ancient oaks on the other. Having turned the corner just beyond this hollow, one is at once amid the scenes of David Copperfield's boyhood.

It was near the close of the year 1848 that Charles Dickens saw Yarmouth for the first time, and some time during his stay there on that occasion he took a walk to Lowestoft, which he afterwards described to Mrs. Watson—to whom, with her husband, the Hon. R. Watson, "David Copperfield" was dedicated—as "a fine place." On his way there he saw the name "Blunderstone" (as he spells it) on a sign-post, and, as he says, he "took it from the said direction-post for the book." So it was that David, in his autobiography, had to write, "I was born at Blunderstone, in Suffolk."

To-day it is Blundeston Rectory[1] which is usually identified as the house which David's father called the "Rookery," because he had seen some old rooks' nests in the elms at the bottom of the garden. It was like him to give it such a name for such a reason. "David Copperfield all over!" cried Miss Betsey. "David Copperfield from head to foot! Calls a house a rookery when there is not a rook near it, and takes the birds on trust, because he sees the nests." But there is a rookery not far from the house to-day, and probably it was there at least a century ago, when a famous poet, whom we shall have to mention presently, strolled and mused beneath the trees in the grounds of Blundeston Lodge. The Rookery, however,—the house that is—is changed, and hardly recognizable as the creeper-clad cottage with the lattice window through which Miss Betsey Trotwood is peeping in H. K. Browne's well-known

[1] It is only fair to mention that there is a local tradition that Blundeston Hall is the "Rookery," and it is also said that Dickens visited the Hall while he was the guest of Sir Morton Peto at Somerleyton.



BLUNDESTON

A VILLAGE ASSOCIATED WITH CHARLES DICKENS AND THOMAS GRAY

frontispiece to the first edition of David's "Personal History and Experience." It seems to stand further back from the road, though there is no record of the road ever having been diverted from it; even David would hardly know it now, and he would have more cause than ever to say—

"There were great changes in my old home. The ragged nests, so long deserted by the rooks, were lopped and topped out of their remembered shapes. The garden had run wild, and half the windows of the house were shut up. It was occupied, but only by a poor lunatic gentleman, and the people who took care of him. He was always sitting at my little window, looking out into the churchyard; and I wondered whether his rambling thoughts ever went upon any of the fancies that used to occupy mine, on the rosy mornings when I peeped out of that same little window in my night-clothes, and saw the sheep quietly feeding in the light of the rising sun."

But if one can find little to remind one of either David or Dickens in the Rookery, it is not so with the old church, which can easily be seen from the Rookery windows and soon reached by the road that turns to the left near the old round village-pound. Surrounded by "dark-clustering" yews, "there is nothing half so green . . . as the grass of that churchyard; nothing half so shady as its trees; nothing half so quiet as its tombstones." Its Norman round tower evidently belonged to an earlier church, and is rather curious in that it tapers slightly towards the top, like the tower of a windmill; but externally the church is just as it was in David's time, and one can still see "the red light shining

on the sun-dial," and ask oneself, as he did, "Is the sundial glad, I wonder, that it can tell the time again?" Within are an ancient font, a good fifteenth century rood-screen, and some old "poppy-head" bench-ends; and the only noticeable change is the absence of the old high-backed pews. David would miss his high-backed pew, "with the window near it, out of which our house can be seen, and *is* seen many times during the morning's service, by Peggotty, who likes to make herself as sure as she can that it's not being robbed, or is not in flames." And meanwhile David, when not occupied with "the sunlight coming in at the open door through the porch," was looking "at the memorial tablets on the wall," and trying to think "of Mr. Bodgers late of this parish, and what the feelings of Mrs. Bodgers must have been, when affliction sore long time Mr. Bodgers bore, and physicians were in vain." And then he would wonder whether they called in Mr. Chillip, and he was in vain, and how he liked "to be reminded of it once a week." And finally, after thinking what a fine play-castle the pulpit would make with another boy coming up the stairs to attack it, he fell off the seat "with a crash" and was "taken out, more dead than alive, by Peggotty."

The village of Blundeston, which consists of one street with a windmill and a smithy at one end of it, and another smithy near the middle of it, still has its Yarmouth carrier, though his name is not Barkis; and there are still in Blundeston a few—a very few—persons who know and are proud of Dickens having chosen their village to be the native place of the hero of his favourite book. Even fewer are the local folk who have

any idea that in their village the poet Gray spent some of the happiest days of his life.

The Rev. Norton Nicholls, who was rector of Lound and Bradwell, but lived at Blundeston Lodge, was one of Gray's dearest friends. They became acquainted about 1760, when Nicholls was at Cambridge; but Gray was not particularly attracted by the young undergraduate until they met in the rooms of Lobb, a Fellow of Peterhouse, when a chance comparison of a line of Milton with one from Dante caused the poet to discover in Nicholls a sympathetic student of literature. They soon became fast friends, and when Nicholls came to live at Blundeston Lodge, a plain but comfortable old house only a few minutes' walk from the "Rookery," Gray became an occasional visitor to this quiet Suffolk village. One or two writers who have not concerned themselves with dates have suggested that the idea of writing his famous "Elegy" came to him while he was walking in Blundeston churchyard; but this is impossible, as the "Elegy" was completed at Stoke Pogis ten years before Gray and Nicholls became acquainted.

Nicholls lived at Blundeston with his mother, and spent much time in beautifying the Lodge grounds and the borders of their charming lake, making the place, according to Mathias, an "oasis," and "one of the most finished scenes of cultivated sylvan delight which this island can offer to our view." Gray's favourite haunts within the grounds are said to have been an old summer-house at the end of the lake and the neighbourhood of an ancient pollard oak. He was much amused when Nicholls started gardening, and writing to him in June, 1769, said—

"And so you have a garden of your own, and you plant and transplant, and are dirty and amused? Are you not ashamed of yourself? Why, I have no such thing, you monster; nor ever shall be either dirty or amused as long as I live. My gardens are in my windows, like those of a lodger up three pairs of stairs in Petticoat Lane, or Camomile Street, and they go to bed regularly under the same roof that I do. Dear! how charming it must be to walk out in one's own *garding*, and sit on a bench in the open air, with a fountain and leaden statue, and a rolling-stone, and an arbour! Have a care of sore throats though, and the *agoe*."

Nicholls was one of the few men who could rouse him out of his chronic melancholy, and in whose company he would talk freely; ordinarily his acquaintances found him silent and dejected. For the sake of Nicholls and one or two others he would exert himself to be pleasant and cheerful, even when in uncongenial company. On one occasion he found two old relatives of his host, rather commonplace people, guests with him at the Lodge, and at first made it fairly obvious that he could not feel comfortable with them. But on noticing that Nicholls was hurt by his manner, he at once set about making himself agreeable to the strangers, with the result that they were delighted with him, and remembered him with pleasure so long as they lived. While here, too, he would always, Mr. Gosse tells us, "interest himself in any reference to farming, or to the condition of the crops, which bore upon his botanical pursuits; one of his daily occupations, in his healthier years, being the construction of a botanical calendar." In the company of Nicholls, he would take long rambles



BLUNDESTON LODGE

VISITED BY THE POET GRAY

about the countryside, both at Blundeston and elsewhere. It was while they were walking together in the fields near Cambridge that Gray composed the charming couplet—

> "There pipes the wood-lark, and the song-thrush there
> Scatters his loose notes in the waste of air."

For the preservation of these lines we are indebted to Nicholls.

Gray died on July 30, 1771. How deeply Nicholls felt his death can be gathered from a letter written to his mother immediately after hearing of his friend's decease—

"I only write now lest you should be apprehensive on my account since the death of my dear friend. Yesterday's post brought me the fatal news. . . . You need not be alarmed for me, I am well, and not subject to emotions violent enough to endanger my health, and besides with good people who pity me and can feel themselves. Afflicted you may be sure I am! You who know I considered Mr. Gray as a second parent, that I thought only of him, talked of him for ever, wished him with me whenever I partook of any pleasure, and flew to him for refuge whenever I felt any uneasiness; to whom now shall I talk of all I have seen here? Who will teach me to read, to think, to feel? I protest to you, that whatever I did or thought had a reference to him,—'Mr. Gray will be pleased with this when I tell him. I must ask Mr. Gray what he thinks of such a person or thing. He would like such a person or dislike such another.' If I met with any chagrins, I comforted myself that I had a treasure at home; if all the world had despised and hated me, I should have thought myself perfectly recompensed in his friendship. Now remains only one loss more; If I lose *you*, I am

left alone in the world. At present I feel I have lost half of myself. Let me hear that you are well."

Before he died, Nicholls was inspired to write his valuable "Reminiscences of Gray," described by Forster[1] as "one of the most charming papers, at once for fulness and brevity, ever contributed to our knowledge of a celebrated man." His death occurred in November, 1809. He was buried at Richmond, where the church contains a memorial tablet, recording that "he was the friend of the illustrious Gray." He was the only contemporary of Gray whose reminiscences of him are of much value to the biographer, though he himself has no claim to be considered a literary man. The Rev. Robert Potter, who has been already mentioned as one of the foremost scholars of the latter half of the eighteenth century, did not become Rector of Lowestoft until after Gray's death, so it is unlikely that he met him at Blundeston; but he wrote of him in a way suggestive of personal acquaintance.

"Mr. Gray was perhaps the most learned man of the age, but his mind never contracted the rust of pedantry. He had too good an understanding to neglect that urbanity which renders society pleasing: his conversation was instructing, elegant, and agreeable. Superior knowledge, an exquisite taste in the fine arts, and, above all, purity of morals, and an unaffected reverence for religion, made this excellent person an ornament to society, and an honour to human nature."

[1] In his "Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith."

CHAPTER XII

GREAT YARMOUTH

Blundeston to Yarmouth—Mr. Barkis—Ham Peggotty—Peggotty's hut—Dickens at Yarmouth—Daniel Defoe—A model town—An "illiberal, tarpaulin crew"—John Wesley—Crabbe—Rev. Richard Turner—Dr. Frank Sayers—James Sayers—Rev. Samuel Cooper—Sir Astley Cooper—Sir James Paget—Samuel Laman Blanchard—Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey—Harriet Martineau—George Borrow—Dawson Turner—Borrow's bravery—His Norfolk rambles—Anna Gurney—Edward FitzGerald at Gorleston—His opinion of "The Romany Rye"—Sir John Fastolff—Margaret Paston—Mautby.

WHEN David Copperfield set out from Blundeston for Yarmouth to spend an eventful fortnight with Mr. Peggotty in that wonderful house of his on the beach, he did so in the company of Mr. Barkis, the carrier, whose route may have been through the coast village of Hopton or by way of the neighbouring village of Lound. Probably Mr. Barkis took the latter route, which would account for the many deviations up and down lanes which David found so tiresome. On approaching Yarmouth, he was not very favourably impressed by it; it looked, he thought, "rather spongy and soppy," and when he noticed how it lay in "a straight low line under the sky," he hinted to Peggotty that "a mound or so might have improved it." He entered it by way of Gorleston (now a flourishing

watering-place) and the long Southtown Road, which afforded him glimpses of the harbour and its shipping; and, after crossing the river by the Southtown Bridge, he probably continued his journey towards Peggotty's house along the picturesque South Quay or Middlegate Street, for he says—

"When we got into the street, . . . and smelt the fish, and pitch, and oakum, and tar, and saw the sailors walking about, and the carts jingling up and down over the stones, I felt that I had done so busy a place an injustice, and said as much to Peggotty, who heard my expressions of delight with great complacency, and told me it was well known (I suppose to those who had the good fortune to be born Bloaters) that Yarmouth was, upon the whole, the finest place in the universe."

Mounted on the broad back of the Herculean Ham, David was now made acquainted with a neighbourhood where everything was very wonderful to a country boy who had never seen a flourishing seaport. There were the timber-strewn yards of the shipbuilders, where the rapping of the caulkers' mauls resounded from the sides of the fishing-boats on the stocks; net-chambers, where the women and girls who worked in them could, had they wished, have "stepped out on nothing" from doorways ten feet from the ground; shipsmiths' forges, where they made nothing that David had seen in the Blundeston smithies; long, narrow rope-walks, where "human spiders" were continually twine-spinning; and, here and there, from a shipwright's yard, the doorway of an inn, or the garden of a beachman's cottage, some strange-looking figure-head from a wrecked or condemned ship would gaze at him with a wooden stare.

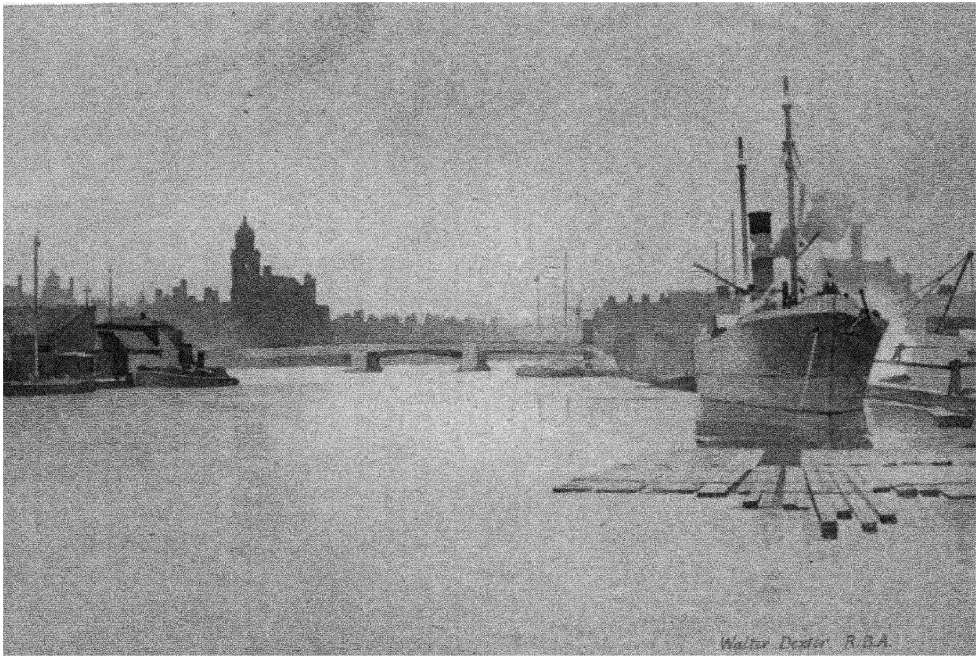
But the most wonderful sight of all was seen when he reached the narrow strip of sandy denes lying between the river and the sea near the harbour mouth. David was looking for Peggotty's house ; but all he could see in this sandy wilderness, was "a black barge, or some other kind of superannuated boat . . . high and dry on the ground, with an iron funnel sticking out of it for a chimney and smoking very cosily." Yet this "ship-looking thing" was Mr. Peggotty's house. "If it had been Aladdin's palace, roc's egg and all, I suppose," writes David, "I could not have been more charmed with the romantic idea of living in it." Sad to say, this romantic dwelling has now disappeared ; but there are still living in Yarmouth many people who can well remember such a house standing on the South Denes, not far from the Nelson monument.

With the inmates of Peggotty's house—Mr. Peggotty, Ham, Little Em'ly, and the fretful Mrs. Gummidge—we are all acquainted. Although David does not tell us so, Mr. Peggotty was, no doubt, a member of one of the famous Yarmouth beach companies, whose original occupation was the ferrying of fish from the fishing-boats to the beach, but who, with the aid of their long, slender yawls, undertook most of the salvage work of the coast, while they also shared in many daring life-boat services when ships were wrecked on the Pightle, Scroby, or Cross Sands. Nall, one of the numerous Yarmouth historians, says that at one time the children of the local beachmen made one prayer and one only, "Pray God, send daddy a good ship ashore before morning." Mr. Peggotty, had he not been a "bachel-dore," would never, we feel sure, have taught his

children such a prayer, and we cannot imagine Little Em'ly uttering it.

The inn from which David took his departure when he went from Yarmouth to London by the stage coach has been identified with the Crown and Anchor, on Hall Quay. Forster, in his "Life of Dickens," states that from the vividness of the boy-impressions in "David Copperfield," it has been inferred that Dickens was acquainted with Yarmouth in his boyhood; but the truth is that he never saw the town until the latter part of 1848, when, in company with Leech and Lemon—Forster himself should have been of the party, but was prevented by illness—he came here from Norwich, stayed at the Royal Hotel on the sea-front, and found Yarmouth "the strangest place in the wide world; one hundred and forty-six miles of hill-less marsh between it and London." He was evidently delighted with the quaintness of the old town, and added, "I shall certainly try my hand at it." Subsequently he suggested that if any one had a grudge against any particular insurance company, the best way to gratify it would be to buy a heavy life annuity and then retire to Yarmouth. The result would be that the insurance company would conclude that "they had got either Old Parr or Methuselah in their books." In "Household Words" he described the town as "one vast gridiron, of which the bars are represented by the rows," *i.e.* the curious narrow lanes connecting the main streets. There are over one hundred and fifty of these rows, and formerly a special kind of cart called a "trolley" was built for traffic in them.

Dickens is not the only famous writer who has



GREAT YARMOUTH

described a storm on the Yarmouth coast, his "Tempest" chapter in "David Copperfield" having in some respects a counterpart in "Robinson Crusoe," though there appears to be no evidence that Defoe visited the town before 1722, when he made his tour through the eastern counties. He was much impressed by the good government of the town, and especially with the "exact keeping" of the Sabbath by its inhabitants.

"Among all these regularities," he wrote, "it is no wonder we do not find abundance of revelling, or that there is little encouragement to assemblies, plays, and gaming meetings at Yarmouth as in some other places; and yet I do not see that the ladies here come behind any of the neighbouring counties, either in beauty, breeding, or behaviour; to which may be added too, not at all to their disadvantage, that they generally go beyond them in fortunes."

Yarmouth, notwithstanding that it has been the birthplace or place of residence of many distinguished men, can hardly be said to be rich in literary associations, and when the name of Dickens has been mentioned in connection with it, it is often assumed that its claims to the possession of such associations have been exhausted. Yet, in spite of the assertion made in the "Memoirs of a Royal Chaplain," that Yarmouth "is the most uncomfortable place in the nation for a man of learning and a generous mind to be fix'd in," the people being "a most illiberal, tarpaulin crew," men of learning have been very content to dwell here, while the recollections of its notable visitors have almost invariably been pleasant ones. The most noteworthy exception is

in the case of John Wesley, who in his Journal disagrees with Defoe, and describes Yarmouth as being "as eminent both for its wickedness and ignorance as ever any seaport in England."

Nall tells us that the poet Crabbe was a frequent visitor to Yarmouth, and suggests that some of the scenes described in his "Borough" may be found on the local coast and by the quay-side; but the Rev. George Crabbe, in his biography of his father, mentions only one occasion on which the poet visited the town, and that was when he brought here the manuscript of "The Borough," in order that he might submit it to his friend and rector, the Rev. Richard Turner, who resided in Yarmouth, and upon whose literary taste and judgment the poet placed the greatest reliance. Mr. Turner's opinion of the poem was "upon the whole, highly favourable," so it was at once despatched to the publishers; but he had previously been less satisfied with several of Crabbe's works, which, in consequence, never saw the light of publicity. The Rev. Richard Turner, whose name is not so well remembered as that of his nephew, Dawson Turner, the antiquary, was a friend of Paley and Canning. He was in the habit of spending a week every year with Crabbe, while the latter was his curate at Sweffling, in Suffolk, and was residing in the neighbouring parish of Glemham. The poet, no doubt, returned some of these visits, and there are several scenes and persons described in his poems which may have been drawn, as Nall suggests, from Yarmouth. The following lines might very well apply to Peggotty's house :—

"Lo! yonder shed; observe its garden ground,
With the low paling, formed of wreck around:
There dwells a fisher; if you view his boat,
With bed and barrel—'tis his house afloat;
Look at his house, where ropes, nets, blocks, abound,
Tar, pitch, and oakum—'tis his boat aground;
That space inclosed, but little he regards,
Spread o'er with relics of masts, sails, and yards:
Fish by the wall, on spits of elder rest,
Of all his food the cheapest and the best,
By his own labour caught, for his own hunger dress'd."

Dr. Frank Sayers, the poet and metaphysician, spent some of his early years in Yarmouth, in the house of his grandfather; but his name is more intimately connected with Norwich, where he subsequently resided. The house in which he lived here has long disappeared. It stood at the south-east corner of Gaol Street. Writing of it in after years, he said it was—

"a stately old-fashioned mansion surrounding three sides of a gloomy court; the hall was floored with chequered marble; the large parlour was wainscoted with cedar, and a spacious staircase of shallow steps led up to the drawing-room, which was a long narrow gallery including seven windows. A Flemish folding screen, covered with gilt leather, inclosed a private nook round the chimney, in which the family sat when by themselves."

A cousin of Dr. Sayers was James Sayers, the caricaturist, who was born here in 1748, his father being a local shipmaster. An unsuccessful love affair is said to have driven him from Yarmouth to London, where his clever caricatures attracted the attention of Pitt, and won him a sinecure appointment. He also distinguished himself as a satirist, and his "Elijah's Mantle," written on

the death of Pitt, made a great impression on the public, though this was chiefly due to its being attributed to Canning. Contemporary with Sayers was the Rev. Samuel Cooper, a Yarmouth curate, whose name is remembered as that of the father of Sir Astley Cooper, the famous surgeon, and as the author of a poem called "The Task," the publication of which, soon after Cowper's "Task" was issued, caused Dr. Parr to make the epigram—

> "To Cowper's Task see Cooper's Task succeed;
> That was a Task to write, but this to read."

In the biography of Sir Astley Cooper we read of several practical jokes played upon the Rev. Dr. Cooper by his frolicsome son, who was a ringleader among the Yarmouth boys in their mischievous pranks. In later years another famous physician had pleasant memories of early days spent in botanizing and collecting birds and fishes in the Yarmouth district. This was Sir James Paget, who was born here, and who afterwards numbered among his intimate friends Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, George Eliot, and Darwin.

Readers of Forster's "Life of Dickens" will remember an interesting drawing by Maclise, in which the artist represents, with a touch of caricature, perhaps, a party of friends of the great novelist, assembled at 58, Lincoln's Inn Fields, on the night of December 2nd, 1844, to hear him read "The Chimes." Carlyle, Douglas Jerrold, Forster, and Maclise himself are of the party, and the artist has succeeded with remarkable cleverness in touching off their varied expressions of interest and admiration; but there is one face in the group which

impresses one by its look of brooding and pre-occupation. It is that of Samuel Laman Blanchard, and one might very well imagine that when the artist was studying it Blanchard was well aware that his life was nearing its end. Within twelve months of that memorable night—in which, as Forster remarks, was the germ of those readings by Dickens to a wider public by which, as much as by his books, the world knew him in his later life—poor Blanchard was dead. He scarcely reached middle age, but had lived long enough to prove the wisdom of the warning of Lord Lytton, who, when Blanchard was at the beginning of his literary career, assured him that "periodical writing is the grave of true genius." But he had an attractive personality, and in enjoying the friendship of such men as Dickens, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and Robert Browning, must have found some compensation for his failure to inscribe his name indelibly on the roll of successful men of letters. In the "Life of Dickens" and the Letters of Lamb we get fleeting glimpses of him, otherwise he would be forgotten. He was born at Yarmouth in 1804 and died in 1845.

Yarmouth boasts of its fine Quay, which for picturesqueness can bear comparison with some more famous ones on the Continent; but it is very doubtful whether it occurs to any one to-day to associate with it the two great contemporary poets Wordsworth and Coleridge, who were here in September, 1798, when they started together for Germany; and although Nelson's sayings and doings when he landed here have never been forgotten, his biographer, Southey, probably trod the Yarmouth streets unnoticed, and was passed unheeded while he jotted down the epitaphs in St.

Nicholas churchyard. Indeed, Yarmouth has always been too busy a place for such events as these to excite its interest or distract its attention from fishing and lodging-house matters; otherwise it might be surprised to learn that as a child Harriet Martineau, unlike the thousands of other children who have disported themselves on Yarmouth beach and jetty, was unable to delight in these popular places.

"On first arriving there," she writes, "my father took me along the old jetty—little knowing what trouble I suffered. I remember the strong grasp of his large hand being some comfort; but there were holes in the planking of the jetty quite large enough to let my foot through; and they disclosed the horrible sight of the waves flowing and receding below, and great tufts of green weeds swaying to and fro."

Which goes to prove that Harriet Martineau was not a healthy-minded child, or she would soon have been paddling in the sea or building sand-castles for the waves to destroy.

George Borrow, while he had his home at Oulton, was a frequent visitor to Yarmouth, and was on friendly terms with Dawson Turner, to whom he entrusted for a while the manuscript of "The Bible in Spain." In the autumn of 1853, Borrow, acting on the advice of his friend Dr. Hake, brought his wife here for the benefit of her health, and for the next seven years Yarmouth was his headquarters while he made a series of excursions into various parts of the British Isles. During those years he did not hire a house, but occupied lodgings, first in King Street (No. 169), and afterwards at Camperdown Place and Trafalgar Place. Within a month of

his arrival he distinguished himself by an act of bravery, of which the following account appeared in the "Bury Post":—

"*Intrepidity.*—Yarmouth jetty presented an extraordinary and thrilling spectacle on Thursday, the 8th inst., about one o'clock. The sea raged frantically, and a ship's boat, endeavouring to land for water, was upset, and the men were engulfed in a wave some thirty feet high, and struggling with it in vain. The moment was an awful one, when George Borrow, the well-known author of 'Lavengro,' and 'The Bible in Spain,' dashed into the surf and saved one life, and through his instrumentality the others were saved. We ourselves have known this brave and gifted man for years, and, daring as was this deed, we have known him more than once to risk his life for others. We are happy to add that he has sustained no material injury."

In his "Wild Wales," Borrow has given us the fruits of one of his holiday excursions from Yarmouth, and from the extracts made from his notebooks, and printed by his biographer, it is evident that he intended at one time to print his impressions of the Isle of Man. In 1856 he contented himself with rambling through his native Norfolk, and on to Ely, calling on the way upon Miss Anna Gurney, who lived near Cromer, and who, according to his own account of the meeting, bored and worried him by asking for an explanation of a difficult point in Arabic, and then talking continuously while he tried to explain it. "I could not study the Arabic grammar and listen to her at the same time," he said, "so I threw down the book and ran out of the room." According to the Rev. A. W. Upcher, who tells the story in the "Athenæum," he seems not to have stopped

running till he reached Old Tucker's Hotel at Cromer, from whence he went on to Sheringham to call on Mr. Upcher.

"He told us," says that gentleman, "there were three personages in the world whom he had always had a desire to see; two of these had slipped through his fingers, so he was determined to see the third. 'Pray, Mr. Borrow, who were they?' He held up three fingers of his left hand and pointed them off with the forefinger of the right: the first, Daniel O'Connell; the second, Lamplighter (the sire of Phosphorous, Lord Berner's winner of the Derby); the third, Anna Gurney. The first two were dead and he had not seen them; now he had come to see Anna Gurney, and this was the end of his visit."

At Sheringham Hall Borrow was greatly interested in a battlepiece by Wouvermans, and he said he had known an officer in the Austrian army who was a descendant of the painter. "Then entering the drawing-room and looking out of the bay-window through the oak wood on the deep blue sea beyond, he seemed for some time quite entranced by the lovely peaceful view," and at last Mr. Upcher felt he must arouse him, and said, "A charming view, Mr. Borrow!" With a deep sigh he slowly answered, "Yes! Please God the Russians don't come here." Borrow returned to his Yarmouth lodgings for the winter, in order to revise finally the manuscript of "The Romany Rye," which was published in the following May. A month later, Edward FitzGerald, who had recently married Lucy Barton, the daughter of the Quaker poet, and was staying in a house on Gorleston cliffs, wrote to Professor Cowell—

"Within hail almost lives George Borrow, who has lately published, and given me, two new volumes of "Lavengro," called "Romany Rye," with some excellent things, and some very bad (as I have made bold to write to him—how shall I face him?). You would not like the Book at all, I think."

Borrow's letters to his publisher and friends betray, at this time, a good deal of irritability and despondency, and such of his acquaintances as came in contact with him appear to have found him anything but a sociable companion. Mr. W. Willmot Dixon, who, with his father, was his guest at Yarmouth in 1859, mentions having heard him pour out all the vials of his wrath against his old enemy, Sir John Bowring (the "Old Radical" of the Appendix to "The Romany Rye"). Again and again he said that Bowring had wrecked his life.

"From remarks that I heard Borrow drop in conversation with my father," writes Mr. Dixon,[1] "I think he must have been a rigid predestinarian, with a firm belief that his own fixed doom was eternal damnation. 'Good-bye, my friend,' he said to my father at parting, 'you are a good man. You will go to Heaven. I shall not. I shall probably never see you again *here*, and I cannot follow you *there*. Good-bye.' And I can recall distinctly now the tone of deep melancholy in his voice and the expression of profound sadness on his face as he spoke those farewell words."

Just before leaving Yarmouth for London, where he spent the next fourteen years of his life, Borrow printed here his "Sleeping Bard," which has, however, the name

[1] In *T. P.'s Weekly*, August 7th, 1903.

of John Murray as publisher on the title-page. Two hundred and fifty copies of this translation from the Welsh were issued; but the only review of it appeared in the "Quarterly," and was written by Borrow himself!

FitzGerald when at Gorleston stayed at Albert House, from the windows of which he could watch the trawlers and fishing-boats passing in and out of the harbour, and the "Sailors walking about with fur caps and their brown hands in their Breeches Pockets." In later years, when he preferred Lowestoft as headquarters while taking short yachting trips along the coast, he and his fisherman friend, "Posh" Fletcher, would sometimes spend a day together in Yarmouth.

"Yesterday," he wrote to Mr. F. Spalding in May, 1876, "we went to Yarmouth, and bought a Boat for the Lugger, and paraded the Town, and dined at the Star Tavern (*Beefsteak for one*), and looked in to the Great Church: where when Posh pulled off his Cap, and stood erect but not irreverent, I thought he looked as good an Image of the Mould that Man was originally cast in, as you may chance to see in the Temple of *The Maker* in these days. The Artillery were blazing away on the Denes; and the little Band-master, who played with his Troop here last summer, joined us as we were walking, and told Posh not to lag behind, for he was not at all ashamed to be seen walking with him. The little well-meaning Ass!"

A favourite ramble with many of Yarmouth's summer visitors is to the ruined castle at Caister, built by that doughty old warrior, Sir John Fastolff, who figures so largely in the "Paston Letters," and less creditably in Shakespeare's "Henry VI."; but very few of these ramblers extend their journeying a mile or two to

Mautby, in order to visit the birthplace of Margaret Paston, that delightful dame whose correspondence reveals by far the most attractive personality presented by the famous letters. She has no claim to be considered a literary celebrity, though she fills so large a part of the three closely printed volumes of Mr. Gairdner's edition; but she was something better, and we can enjoy her letters the more because we know quite well that the writer of them can hardly have even dreamt that they would come under the public eye. A Hannah More may pronounce them "quite barbarous in style"; but who is there to-day who, having accustomed himself to Dame Margaret's queer spelling, does not prefer her letters to those of Hannah More, or can doubt that, after centuries of oblivion, she has won for herself a permanent place in the world's esteem?

Mautby is a place of considerable acreage, but small population, known to cruisers on the Broads as a Bure-side parish containing within its borders Mautby Swim, so-called because it is a part of the river where cattle were made to swim across in order that they might feed in the marshes of the Bure valley. In Domesday it is spelt "Malteby," a name, like those of most of the neighbouring parishes, of Norse or Danish origin. From the beginning of the thirteenth century until the latter part of the fifteenth the lordship of the manor was held by the Mautebys, the last of whom was Margaret de Mauteby, who became the wife of John Paston, the son and heir of Sir William Paston, the judge. In the "Letters" we first hear of Margaret through Dame Agnes Paston, the judge's wife, who writes to her husband from Paston, in Norfolk, announcing the "coming and the bringing

home" of that "gentlewoman," adding, "And as for the first acquaintance between John Paston and the said gentlewoman, she made him gentle cheer in gentle wise, and said he was verily your son. And so I hope there shall be need of no great treaty betwixt them."

Margaret Paston's letters to her husband commence with one of uncertain date, believed to have been written soon after her marriage, which took place about 1440. She tells her "right reverend and worshipful husband," to whom she recommends herself with "all her simple heart," that eleven hundred Flemings had landed at Waxham, a few miles from Paston, and eight hundred of them had been taken, and "kylte," and drowned. But although we get occasional references to Paston and other places in East Norfolk, most of Dame Margaret's letters during the early years of her married life were written from Norwich, where the Pastons had a town house. Indeed, at that time it was safer for the Paston dames to be there than at Paston during their husbands' absence from home; for the Norfolk coast was frequently threatened by foreign pirates, who occasionally captured ships and men, causing Dame Agnes to pray that "the sea may be better kept than it is now, or else it shall be a perilous dwelling by the sea coast." But wherever Margaret Paston might be, she was always devoted to her husband's interests; for her letters are full of her concern for his business affairs, and when claimants for one of his estates stormed and wrecked the manor-house she had to be carried from it by force. As Mr. Gairdner remarks, her letters contain no conventional expressions of tenderness—"the conventionality of the age seems to have required not tenderness, but humility, on the part

of women towards the head of a family"—but when her husband was taken ill in London, and the difficulties of travelling, and the care of a young child, prevented her going to see him, her loving, womanly nature is revealed.

"Right worshipful husband," she writes, "I recommend me to you, desiring heartily to hear of your welfare, thanking God of your amending of the great disease that you have had; and I thank you for the letter that you sent me, for by my troth, my mother and I were sad in hearts from the time that we learnt of your sickness till we learnt verily of your amending. My mother behested another image of wax of the weight of you to our Lady of Walsingham, and she sent four nobles to the four Orders of Friars at Norwich to pray for you, and I have behested to go on a pilgrimage to Walsingham, and to St. Leonard's for you; by my troth, I had never so heavy a season as I had from the time that I heard of your sickness till I learnt of your amending. . . . If I might have had my will, I should have seen you ere this. I would you were at home, if it were for your ease (and your sore might be as well looked to here as it is there ye be), now liever than a gown, though it were of scarlet."

For the amusement of her absent husband, Dame Margaret sometimes gossips in quite a modern way, and, having steered her own course into the harbour of matrimony, is not above poking fun at her less fortunate relatives.

"Katherine Walsham will be wedded on the Monday next after Trinity Sunday, as it is told me, to the gallant with the 'grete chene;' and there is purveyed for her much good array of gowns, girdles, and attires, and much other good array. . . . My mother prayeth you to remember my sister, and to do your part faithfully ere ye come

home to help to get her a good marriage. It seemeth by my mother's language that she would never so fain to be delivered of her as she is now. It is told here that Knivett the heir is for to marry; both his wife and child be dead, as it was told here. Wherefore she would that you should enquire whether it be so or no, and what his livelihood is, and if ye think that it may be for to do, to let him be spoke with thereof. . . . As for tidings, the Queen came into this town (Norwich) on Tuesday last past afternoon, and abode here till it was Thursday afternoon; and she sent after my cousin Elizabeth Clere by Sharynborn, to come to her; and she durst not disobey her commandment, and came to her. And when she came into the Queen's presence, the Queen made right much of her, and desired her to have a husband, the which ye shall know of hereafter. But as for that, he is never nearer than he was before."

In 1460, and for some years after, Dame Margaret, her husband now a knight of the shire, was living at Hellesdon, near Norwich, where was one of the Paston manor-houses; but in 1465—about a year before John Paston's death—that house was "beaten down" by the Duke of Suffolk, and from then until her death she seems to have spent the greater part of her time at Mautby, amid the scenes with which she had been familiar as a child. She died in November, 1484, having given instructions in her Will that her body should be buried in the aisle of the church of Mautby, before the image of Our Lady there, "in which aisle rest the bodies of divers of mine ancestors, whose souls God assoil." It was also her desire that her executors should—

"purvey a stone of marble to be laid aloft upon my grave within a year next after my decease; and upon that stone I will have four scutcheons set at the four

corners . . . and in the midst of the said stone I will have a scutcheon set of Mautby's arms alone, and under the same these words written, 'In God is my trust,' with a scripture writing in the verges thereof rehearsing these words, 'Here lies Margaret Paston, late the wife of John Paston, and heir of John Mawteby, squire, and so forth, in the same scripture rehearsed the day of the month and the year that I shall decease: on whose soul God have mercy.'"

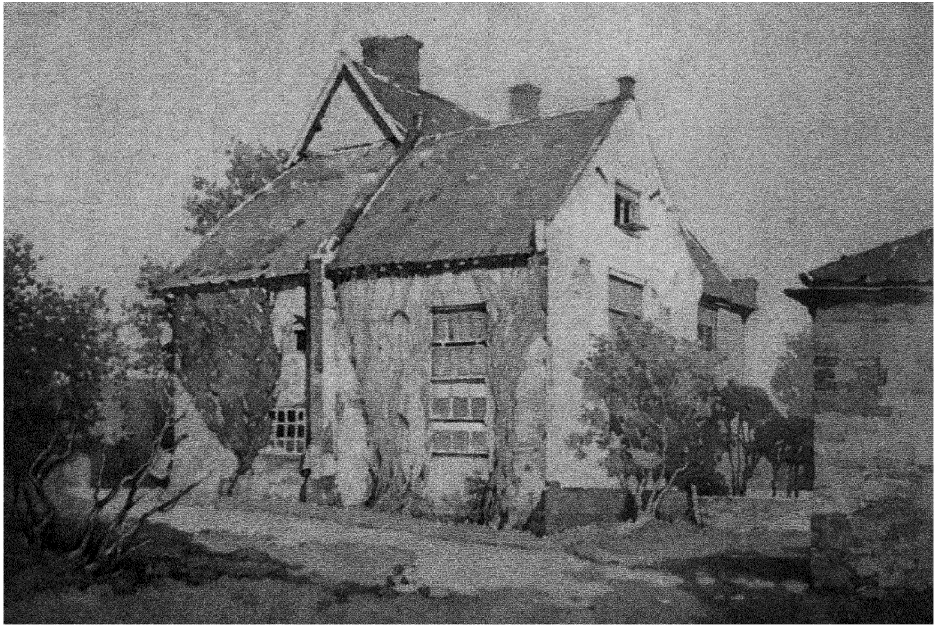
It is much to be regretted that the aisle in which Dame Margaret was buried was allowed to become a ruin, and has now entirely disappeared. But at the south end of the nave there is a marble tomb with a mutilated effigy, believed to be that of Walter de Mawteby, who died about the middle of the thirteenth century.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAVENEY VALLEY

Beccles—Crabbe married at Beccles—The Beccles martyrs—Roos Hall—Sir John Suckling—Barsham Rectory—Lawrence Echard—The mother of Lord Nelson—Rev. A. Inigo Suckling—Barsham Church—Barsham Hall—Sir John Suckling at Barsham—Bungay—Friar Bungay—Robert Greene—Ewing Ritchie—Hannah More—Elizabeth Bonhote—Bonhotian advice—Grammar School—Crabbe at Bungay—His narrow escape—The Childses—Agnes Strickland—Borrow—FitzGerald—Daniel O'Connell—Dickens—Charles Lamb on Bungay—Chateaubriand in exile—His life at Bungay—His love-affair with Charlotte Ives.

FOR a spring morning, when the hawthorn buds are bursting into leaf and the corncrakes are back in the lush-grassed meadow-lands, I know of few more delightful walks in Eastern England than those afforded by the roads winding close to the valley borders of some of the higher reaches of the Waveney. For above Beccles, which is the highest point to which the majority of cruisers on the Waveney ascend, the valley is nowhere so wide that the rambler along one side of it cannot enjoy the charms of the other, while the water-meadows, which have been long reclaimed, have advanced beyond that stage of treeless monotony characteristic of the marshlands of the lower valley, and, while still subject to occasional floods, are so far firm land that the homes of other men than the semi-aquatic eel-catcher



OLD HALL, BARSHAM

A HOME OF SIR JOHN SUCKLING

and marshman have a permanent place on them. It is a valley which seems to have known no very stirring time since those far-away days when the *vesterviking* Northmen sailed their war-keels up its sluggish river, and, judging by the small share its inhabitants generally appear to have taken in the events which go to make up the story of our land, it must have been happy in having no history. Peace within its borders seems to have been almost perpetual, perhaps because its quiet towns have never been large enough to become centres of strife; and it may be that that peacefulness which is as impressive as its charm had an influence on some who were born in it, and others who were drawn to it by that spell woven in restful places. Had they played no larger part in life than that for which there is a fitting stage in this slumbrous valley, we should probably have heard little of them; but having met with them or followed them, in reality or in fancy, through different and perhaps more stirring scenes, it is none the less pleasant to tread the quieter ways they have trod.

It is a restful valley, and all its ways are leisurely—the seaward flow of its waters, the movements of the cattle in its daisy-starred meadows, the gait of the ploughman in the bordering fields, and the progress of the dark-sailed wherries on the river. So to enjoy to the full its dreamy peace and quietude one must enter into its mood of lethargy, to which there is nothing more conducive than the somnolence of the Beccles streets on any day in the week save market-day. For Beccles overhangs the valley at the point where our ramble begins, and from its churchyard one has a view far up the valley, full of promise in its reposeful charm. In the

town itself there is little save the church to delay one in leaving it, nor are its associations such as we are seeking, excepting in that it was in Beccles Church that George Crabbe, the poet, was married, and that Edward Fitz-Gerald, who often came here to chat with his friend, Dr. Crowfoot, had no fault to find with the place apart from its name always suggesting to him "hooks and eyes." The register entry of Crabbe's marriage reads:—

"George Crabbe, clerk of this parish, singleman, and Sarah Elmy of the same, singlewoman, were married in this church by license from ye Chancellor this fifteenth day of December in the year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty Three by me, P. Routh, Curate."

Then follow the signatures of Crabbe and his wife and of William Elmy and H. Elmy as witnesses. The Elmys, to whom some reference was made when we were dealing with Crabbe's connection with Parham, occupied a corner house on the north side of Market Street, only a few steps from the church. Nearer the station this street is called Station Road, and about half way down it stands the Martyrs' Memorial Chapel, occupying a site adjoining the ground on which Thomas Spicer, John Denny, and Edmund Poole were burnt at the stake in the reign of Queen Mary. An inscription over the entrance to the chapel is from Foxe's "Actes and Monuments"—

"When they rose from praier all went joyfvllie to the stake, and being bovnd thereto, and the fire bvrning arovnd them, they praised God in such an avdible voice that it was wonderfvl to all those which stood by and heard them."

Fuller, in writing of the Marian martyrs, says :—

"It is vehemently suspected that three of them, burnt at Beccles, had their death antedated before the writ *de hæretico comburendo* could possibly be brought down to the sheriff. And was not this (to use Tertullian's Latin in a somewhat different sense) *festinatio homicidii?* Now, though charity may borrow a point of law to save life, surely cruelty should not steal one to destroy it."

For forty-eight years the pastor of the Martyrs' Memorial Chapel was the Rev. George Wright, father of Mr. Aldis Wright, the friend and literary executor of Edward FitzGerald.

In leaving Beccles by the Bungay road, on the Suffolk side of the river, a charming view of the valley opens out on the right, having in the foreground Roos Hall, a picturesque and well-preserved Elizabethan house, built about 1583. Soon after it was built it passed into the possession of the wife of Sir John Suckling, whose family has been intimately associated with the adjoining parish of Barsham for many generations; and for a while there was a prospect of its becoming the home of his son, Sir John Suckling, the poet; but on the death of his father the young court gallant found himself so amply provided with rich estates as to be disinclined to add to their number, preferring rather to ruffle it at court than settle down to the quiet life of a country gentleman. For all that, there is reason to believe that the witty young gamester and charming song-writer spent some of his early years in the Waveney Valley, and just beyond Roos Hall the Bungay road enters the parish of which the history is chiefly that of the Suckling family.

Unquestionably, the most charming house in Barsham is its rectory, standing close beside the ancient round-towered church, some distance back from the road on the right, and separated from it by a pleasant park. In the whole valley there is no house more pleasing to the eye than this delightful one with the time-weathered Dutch gables of the Caroline period and its windows with armorial bearings of the Sucklings and the Earl of Norfolk in stained glass. Within, its panelled rooms have an atmosphere of the past and a silent suggestiveness of old-time romance; nor is the impression one gets of its being a historical house lessened by what we know of its history. In the reign of Charles II. there was born here Lawrence Echard, the great ecclesiastical historian, whose father was rector of the parish; a little more than fifty years later Catherine Suckling, who became the wife of the Rev. Edmund Nelson and the mother of Lord Nelson, was born in one of the old panelled bedrooms; and from 1839 to 1856, the house was the home of the Rev. A. Inigo Suckling, the Suffolk historian. These are associations to make Barsham rectory historic, and there is also a large secret panelled hiding-place in one of its rooms to make it a house of mystery. In such a house, and with such surroundings, a man of leisure, it would seem, must needs become a student and a thinker, even though the world may never benefit by his "idly meditative days."

The church, on which the thatched roof has just been renewed in the course of some restoration rendered necessary by the east end having been struck by lightning in February, 1906, has a Norman round tower

and some thick Norman walls; but of the original windows only a small one remains on the north side of the nave, though there are traces of a similar one on the south side, where the porch has been built over it. In the south wall of the chancel there is an interesting lancet window with a transom; but the rest of the stonework is chiefly of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A fine brass, representing a knight in armour, is that of Sir Robert Atte Tye, who died in 1380; while an early Renaissance altar-tomb of moulded brick, with arabesque panels and a mutilated inscription, is probably that of Sir Edward Eckingham, who lived in the reign of Henry VIII., occupying the hall which afterwards belonged to the Sucklings. He was the builder of a chantry chapel, of which the arches and pillars remain in the rebuilt north wall of the nave. The church has no structural chancel, the east end being divided off by a Jacobean screen, the beam of which is probably the old rood beam. At the present time there are two fonts, one Norman, which was discovered some years ago; the other of late Tudor date. A list of the rectors and patrons since 1321, including the names of several Sucklings, hangs in the nave, where there is also a seventeenth century alms-box. Four of the bells are new, and two of them bear inscriptions to the effect that they were given in memory of Lord Nelson and his uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling, who first took him to sea. Externally the church is remarkable for the almost unique lozenge-patterned flint and stone panelling of the east end, the pattern being continued in the tracery of the east window.

On the north side of the church a leafy lane, if

followed a little way westward, terminates in a rough by-road leading down to the old Hall, formerly the manor-house of the Sucklings. For many years this ancient house has been converted into a farmhouse, and the approach to it is now by way of the farmyard, beyond which are the meadow-lands of the Waveney, the waters of which formerly filled the moat still bordering three sides of the garden. In front the house has been disfigured by a coating of pinkish wash; but at the sides the old brickwork is visible, including that of some filled-in doorways and window-openings; while at the back there are ruined walls draped with ivy and bright in spring with wallflowers. Picturesque the old house is still, but sadly changed since the time when it was the home of a Chancellor of the Exchequer to James I., and a Royalist Suckling made it the headquarters of a troop of Horse during the Civil War.

As a lad Sir Thomas Suckling is believed to have spent some years at Barsham, and although the greater part of his life was passed amid far different scenes, it is not impossible that his mind, too often bemused by debauchery, was at times sweetened by memories of the Waveney meads in which he wandered as a child, and that those memories provided him with pleasing pictures for his tender love-songs. Of some of these it has well been said that, although written in prison, they "remind us of the caged bird which learns its sweetest and most plaintive notes when deprived of its woodland liberty." As a cavalier, Suckling at least displayed gallantry towards the ladies, who inspired all that was best in him as a poet; and even when, as in his famous "Ballad upon a Wedding," he assumed the character of a rustic, the



OLD HALL, BARSHAM

crimson doublet of the gallant shows through the thread-worn smock of the hind. It was the marriage of Lord Broghill to Lady Margaret Howard, daughter of the Earl of Suffolk, which was immortalized in that delightful ballad, which would please readers now as much as ever had there been nothing good in it save those charming lines—

"Her feet beneath her petticoat
Like little mice, stole in and out
As if they feared the light:
But oh! she dances such a way:
No sun upon an Easter-day
Is half so fine a sight."

It may be that Suckling was at Barsham for a while in 1631; for in that year he is said to have attached himself to a force of six thousand men which, under the Marquis of Hamilton, sailed from the neighbouring port of Yarmouth to reinforce the army of Gustavus Adolphus; but if he was here then, it was probably for the last time. For on his return from the Continent he flung himself into dissipation, finding far more fascination in dicing and card-playing than in rural scenes or feats of arms. The picture Aubrey gives of him about this time is:—

"He was incomparably ready at reparteeing, and his wit most sparkling when most set on and provoked. He was the greatest gallant of his time, the greatest gamester both for bowling and cards; so that no shopkeeper would trust him for sixpence, as to-day for instance he might by winning be worth £200 and the next day he might not be worth half so much, or perhaps be sometimes minus nihilo. He was of middle stature and slight strength, brisk round eyes, reddish-faced, and red-nosed (ill-liver), his head not big, his hair

a kind of sand colour. His beard turned up naturally, so that he had a brisk and graceful look."

It is a picture hardly in keeping with the water-meadows, or with an old farmhouse which for centuries has seen, in all probability, no worse dissipation than a farmhand's indulgence in a "glass too much" of home-brewed ale.

In returning from the old Hall to continue his journey up the valley, the traveller has the choice of keeping to the main road or rambling through the fields by a footpath running parallel to it as far as the foot of a low hill on which stands Shipmeadow Church. Just beside the church the road divides into what are known as the High and Low roads, each running westward in the same direction, though the Low road keeps closer to the valley and affords the pleasanter views of the scenery bordering the river. Away to the right Geldeston Lock is seen, formerly the scene of some prize fights such as Borrow delighted in; but the Waveney here is so narrow as to be almost indistinguishable as it winds amid the water-meadows, and the wherries on it seem to be sailing in some mysterious way amid buttercups, marsh marigolds, and cuckoo-flowers. A little further on a fine old wooden water-mill, the first encountered by cruisers in voyaging up the Waveney, stands within a stone's-throw of the second lock; and then, about two miles from the spot where they parted, the two roads re-unite, and the church-towers and red roofs of Bungay are seen clustered on a low promontory projecting into the midst of the valley. But before the town is entered the

Roman road, Stone Street, is crossed near the Watch House Inn, not far from which was the ancient Wain Ford, the lowest ford on the river.

Along the whole valley of the Waveney there is no town more picturesque than this ancient stronghold of the Earls of Norfolk, around which the river makes a horseshoe bend to embrace its breezy Common; nor is there any town in the neighbourhood in which there is so much to interest an antiquary. In the midst of it the massive round towers of the Bigods' ruined castle dominate it from the midst of the remains of its huge earthworks; in its principal churchyard are some ivy-grown fragments of a Benedictine nunnery; close by stands one of the quaintest and best-preserved old market crosses in the Eastern counties; while in St. Mary's Street is a fine sixteenth century house which alone is worth a journey to see. I may, perhaps, be justly accused of partiality when I claim so much for this sleepy little town; for one who has spent many years in a place can hardly be expected to write of it entirely without bias; still, after having seen almost every town in East Anglia, I am ready to maintain that none of them can compare with it in old-world charm and pleasant surroundings. Whenever I

> "In thought go up and down
> The pleasant streets of that dear old town,"

I am reminded of early associations of which a busy life has not obliterated even the most trivial details; there is hardly a house of which I cannot recall the outward aspect. Prominent amongst them is that ancient sweet-shop into which, as a school-boy, you descended as into a cellar, and where a grim-looking old dame,

who seemed by her manner to consider your entrance an intrusion, provided you for a halfpenny with two gaily-striped "barber's-poles," a pair of gelatinous fishes, each with a single beady eye, or a yard-long "walking-stick" of yellowish brown rock, the last named produced from a long canister, like an exaggerated coffee tin. After a lapse of five-and-twenty years, that little shop down by the river has a greater attraction for me than any other in the ancient Bridge Street, though one of them, a large red-brick house, which was partly occupied by a stonemason, whose good lady would sell you thirty small pears for a penny, is far more noteworthy in having been for a time the residence of that eminent but susceptible Frenchman, Francois Rene, Vicomte de Chateaubriand.

The early history of Bungay is largely that of the famous family of Bigod, whose baronial castle, in consequence of the disloyalty of its turbulent owner, was finally dismantled by the King's orders; but even in early Plantagenet times it seems to have produced a learned man in Friar Bungay, the friend of Roger Bacon. Indeed, these two Franciscans long afterwards supplied the title of one of Robert Greene's most popular plays, the plot of which has a strong local colouring, and is thus summarized by the Rev. Dr. Raven: Prince Edward is hunting the hart in the Forest of Framlingham, and comes to "Merry Fressingfield," where at the Hall he becomes enamoured of a simple rustic beauty, the "fair Margaret of Fressingfield." Henry III., however, summons his son to himself, having other views for a matrimonial alliance, and the Prince deputes the Earl of Lincoln to look

after his interests. Margaret, apparently without intent, captivates not only the Earl, but two stout yeomen, Sersby of Cratfield and Lambert of Laxfield, who slay each other in single combat. This tragic event Friar Bungay exhibits in his magic glass to the sons of the combatants, students at Oxford, who are not backward to follow their fathers' examples, and the simple Margaret, after unwillingly causing this quadruple devastation, becomes Countess of Lincoln. The fair at Harleston, and the conversation about a horse which had been sold by the father of one of Margaret's many admirers to a man at Beccles, are described in very lively dialogue, and if the time is not accurately represented, the same may be said of the greater part of Shakespeare's historical plays. Friar Bungay, like other magicians, had a dog, and "dog Bungay" was a name not unknown, though not so common as "dog Toby" of Apocryphal fame. Sir John Harrington had a dog Bungay, of which he wrote to Prince Henry, eldest son of James I. :—

"Now let Ulysses praise his dog Argus, or Tobite be led by that dog whose name doth not appear, yet could I say such things of my Bungey, for so was he styled, as might shame them both, either for good faith, clear wit, or wonderful deeds."

The late Ewing Ritchie, in his "East Anglia," mentions among the earliest literary effusions which emanated from Bungay "The Dome of Heretiques; or a discovery of subtle Foxes who were tyed tayle to tayle, and crept into the Church to do mischief"; but he is more entertaining when he goes on to describe the social life

of the town as it was in the latter half of the eighteenth century, when Hannah More—whose father was born at Thorp Hall, Harleston, a few miles higher up the valley—in writing to Garrick said the place was—

"a much better town than I expected, very clean and pleasant. . . . You are," she added, "the favourite bard of Bungay, and the dramatic furore rages terribly among the people, the more so, I presume, from being allowed to vent itself so seldom. Everybody goes to the play every night—that is, every other night, which is as often as they perform. Visiting, drinking, and even card-playing, is for this happy month suspended; nay, I question if, like Lent, it does not stop the celebration of weddings, for I do not believe there is a damsel in the town who would spare the time to be married during this rarely occurring scene of festivity. It must be confessed, however, the good folks have no bad taste."

At the time when Hannah More wrote this a Norwich company of tragedians were in the town, performing in the old theatre, which is now converted into a Corn Hall.

About the time of Hannah More's visit to Bungay there was living in the town Elizabeth Bonhote, a popular novelist of her day, whose husband combined the duties of a solicitor with those of the captaincy of the 2nd Company of Bungay Volunteers. She was the author of several novels, one of which was entitled "Bungay Castle"; but the work which chiefly commended her to the matrons of England was her "Parental Monitor," in which, amid a medley of maternal advice and moralizing, a number of letters from and answers to correspondents were introduced in the manner still in vogue in certain papers avowedly



BUNGAY, FROM THE RIVER WAVENEY

devoted to the moral uplifting of youth. To such readers as can find entertainment in learning what kind of advice was given to Miss Catherine Haughty, when that young lady, who liked to live at her ease, "dress fine, play high, and to be seen at every publick place," had fascinated an infirm, ugly, but wealthy suitor; or to Miss Henrietta Bevil, who, after being "brought up in ease and idle gentility," found herself, by the sudden death of her parents, "for ever deprived of all her flattering and high-raised expectations," a perusal of the "Parental Monitor" can be cordially recommended. But in case some may be indisposed to do this, and thus unwittingly debar themselves from acquiring much wisdom, I venture to give them here the benefit of a little Bonhotian advice and information.

"Many of our English novels," you should know, "contain moral and entertaining lessons, and many of the characters are worthy of imitation: others there are, would tend to mislead your imagination, and give rise to a thousand erroneous and ridiculous expectations. The Spectators, the works of Richardson, Brooke, Burney, Cooper, Moore, Lee, may be read with delight and cannot fail of improving your minds, and of affording you the highest entertainment. For your more serious reading, choose Young, Blair, Chapone, Gregory, Thomson, and the Oeconomy of Human Life. Observe the precepts they contain, and be assured, if you follow such excellent guides, you cannot fail of acting right, and rendering yourselves useful and exemplary members of society."

In Earsham Street, which runs westward from the radiating point of all the Bungay main streets, the market-place, the Grammar School is interesting owing

to the poet Crabbe having been a scholar there, though not in the building now used, which is comparatively modern. First days at a boarding-school are rarely pleasant to a boy who has been accustomed to a mother's care; but Crabbe seems to have been exceptionally ill-prepared for having to look after himself. Until he went to school here, we are told, he had even relied on his mother to dress him, and on awaking the first morning in Bungay he at once found himself in difficulties. Watching the other boarders dressing themselves appears to have helped him not at all, and finally, turning to his bed-fellow, he whispered: "Master G——, can you put on your shirt? for—for I'm afraid I cannot!" And it was while he was at Bungay school he nearly—as he always afterwards believed—lost his life. With some other boys, he was one day playing a game which seems to have partly consisted of being put into a large dog-kennel called the "black hole." Crabbe was the first to enter this kennel, which soon became so crammed with boys that he felt he was being suffocated. His shrieks, however, were unheeded, and it was not until he bit the hand of the boy nearest to him, who roared out, "Crabbe is dying! Crabbe is dying!" that he was allowed to escape. Years afterwards he still had so vivid a recollection of the horrible sensation he experienced in the "black hole" that he said, "A minute more, and I must have died."

To-day Bungay is undoubtedly most widely known in consequence of the name of the town appearing on the last pages of so many books that have been printed here; and this reminds us that the local branch of the well-known firm of printers is an old-established one,

which owed most of its ancient fame to the enterprise of John Childs, who was largely concerned in the publication of the Imperial Edition of Standard Authors, and to whom was mainly due the destruction of the Bible-printing monopoly. In the earlier half of the last century the Bungay Press became widely famous for its many cheap and valuable productions and reprints, while the house of John Childs, in Broad Street—easily distinguished by its pillared portico—was frequently a meeting-place of scholarly folk and literary celebrities. Robert Childs, a son of John of that ilk, married a sister of Agnes Strickland, and the historian of the Queens of England was an occasional guest at the Broad Street house. There she met a certain gentleman who had compiled a French dictionary the Childses were printing, and who appears to have been afflicted with a slight impediment in his speech. During dinner, Mr. Ritchie tells us, Agnes Strickland, to whom kings were more than human and little less than divine, turned to this gentleman and asked: "Do you not think it was a cruel and wicked act to murder the sainted and unfortunate Charles I.?" "Why, ma'am," was the stammered reply, "I'd have p-p-poisoned him!" George Borrow, too, appears to have known the Childses, and to have ridden over to their house whilst he had his home at Oulton; and in a letter written to him by the Rev. George Cobb, of Ellingham, under date of November 19th, 1859, we read: "FitzGerald was at Bungay last week. He was staying with Mr. (Charles) Childs, and I met him at the Singing Class which the latter has established, and which is working very well."

This appears to have been a custom of FitzGerald

for some years, for writing to Frederick Tennyson in 1850, he says :—

"Sometimes . . . I go over to a place elegantly called *Bungay*, where a Printer lives who drills the young folks of a manufactory there to sing in Chorus once a week. . . . They sing some of the English Madrigals, some of Purcell, and some of Handel, in a way to satisfy me, who don't want perfection, and who believe that the *grandest* things do not depend on delicate finish. If you were here now, we would go over and hear the Harmonious Blacksmith sung in Chorus, with words, of course. It almost made me cry when I heard the divine Air rolled into vocal harmony from the four corners of a large Hall. One can scarce comprehend the Beauty of the English Madrigals till one hears them done (though coarsely) in this way and on a large scale: the play of the parts as they alternate from the different quarters of the room."

A celebrity of another kind associated with the old house in Broad Street was Daniel O'Connell, whose speech, delivered in the old Theatre, was reported by Charles Dickens, who posted down from London to take the necessary notes. Years afterwards, when Dickens heard of O'Connell's release from prison by the judgement of the Lords on appeal, he may have had some recollection of that Bungay speech when he wrote: "O'Connell's speeches are the old thing: fretty, boastful, frothy, waspish at the voices in the crowd, and all that; but with no true greatness."

We find, too, Charles Lamb writing to Mr. Childs in 1834, offering to lend him his own "sole copy" of the "Essays of Elia." "In return," he adds, "you shall favour me with the loan of one of those Norfolk-bred

grunters that you laud so highly; I promise not to keep it above a day." And he goes on to remark: "What a funny name Bungay is! I never dreamt of a correspondent thence. I used to think of it as some Utopian town, or borough in Gotham land. I now believe in its existence, as part of Merry England."

How it happened that famous French writer and politician Chateaubriand came to Bungay is related in one of the six volumes of his "Memoirs." When, in 1793, he was compelled to leave his native land, then in the throes of the Terror, he first occupied a garret in Holborn, where he suffered great hardships, and for a time was so ill that more than one doctor gave him up as incurable. He himself believed he was dying when he began his essay on "Revolutions"; but he regained his health and contrived to earn a little money by making translations. This small sum, however, was soon exhausted, and after he and a friend had made their last shilling buy food for them for five days, he was, as he says, "devoured with hunger. I burned with fever, sleep had deserted me, I sucked pieces of linen which I soaked in water, I chewed grass and paper." Just as he was in the lowest depths of despair his wife's relatives sent him some money, and he took possession of another garret in the neighbourhood of Marylebone Street. From thence he removed to Beccles, where he found employment in translating some old French MSS., and afterwards in giving French lessons to young people of the neighbourhood. Among his pupils was Charlotte Ives, a very pretty and charming girl with large dark eyes, whose father was rector of St. Margaret, Ilketshall, but lived in Bridge

Street, Bungay. Master and pupil were mutually attracted by each other; and the former's attentions were so marked that Miss Ives concluded that it was only his lack of means and position prevented his declaring his love. Her mother, to whom she confided her feelings, seems to have taken a like view of the matter; and one day, when Chateaubriand was staying at Bungay, she proposed to him that he should marry her daughter and inherit their property. How Chateaubriand received this proposal he himself has related: "I threw myself at Mrs. Ives' feet, and covered her hands with my kisses and my tears. She stretched out her hand to pull the bell-rope. 'Stop,' I cried, 'I am a married man!' She fell back fainting."

What were the feelings of Charlotte Ives when she heard that her admirer already had a wife in France, we are not told; but evidently she was not quite inconsolable, for subsequently she married a naval officer who became Admiral Sutton, and who lived at Ditchingham Lodge, an old house pleasantly situated at the foot of the Bath Hills which border the Waveney. Once again, at least, she met Chateaubriand; but that was not until nearly thirty years had elapsed since he made to her mother that startling confession. By that time he had returned to England as Ambassador of France, and she called on him one day to induce him to use his influence with Lord Canning to secure the appointment of one of her sons to his suite as Governor-General of India. Chateaubriand seems to have really loved her; but, as he told himself after their meeting, although she was the first woman he had ever loved, a sentiment of that kind

"was in no way sympathetic with my stormy nature, the latter would have corrupted it and made me incapable of enjoying such sacred delectations."

The old red-brick house with which the name of the amorous Frenchman has by such curious chance become connected, is seen on the right as one leaves the town by way of Bridge Street. For a time Chateaubriand used one of its rooms as a school-room, and, according to Mr. Rider Haggard, there is a local tradition that his pupils used to call him Monsieur "Shatterbrain."

CHAPTER XIV

THE WAVENEY VALLEY (*continued*)

Mr. H. Rider Haggard—Sir Samuel Baker—Broome Rectory —Thomas Manning—Lamb and Manning—Geldeston Hall—FitzGerald at Geldeston—Nero and the delicacy of Spring—Stuston—William Broome—His association with Pope—Diss —John Skelton—His attacks on Wolsey—His poems—"The Death of Phyllyp Sparowe"—Skelton and the "curious impertinent" man—"Ware the Hawke"—Skelton's death—Mrs. Barbauld—Her Palgrave school and its scholars—Charles Lamb and Mrs. Barbauld.

FOR a day's ramble in the Waveney Valley it is enough to walk from Beccles to Bungay along the Suffolk side of the river and return to Beccles by the road following the windings of the valley on the Norfolk side. This latter road is a continuation of that leaving Bungay by way of Bridge Street, and just across the river it passes through Ditchingham, where Mr. H. Rider Haggard has his home and the garden he has so lovingly described in his "Gardener's Year." But Ditchingham House stands some distance to the left of our road, and so, too, does Hedenham Hall, where dwelt for a time Sir Samuel Baker, the African explorer and author of several fascinating books of travel and adventure; so, as Beccles should be reached before the night-mists gather over Gillingham Dam and marshes, it will be as well if we hasten

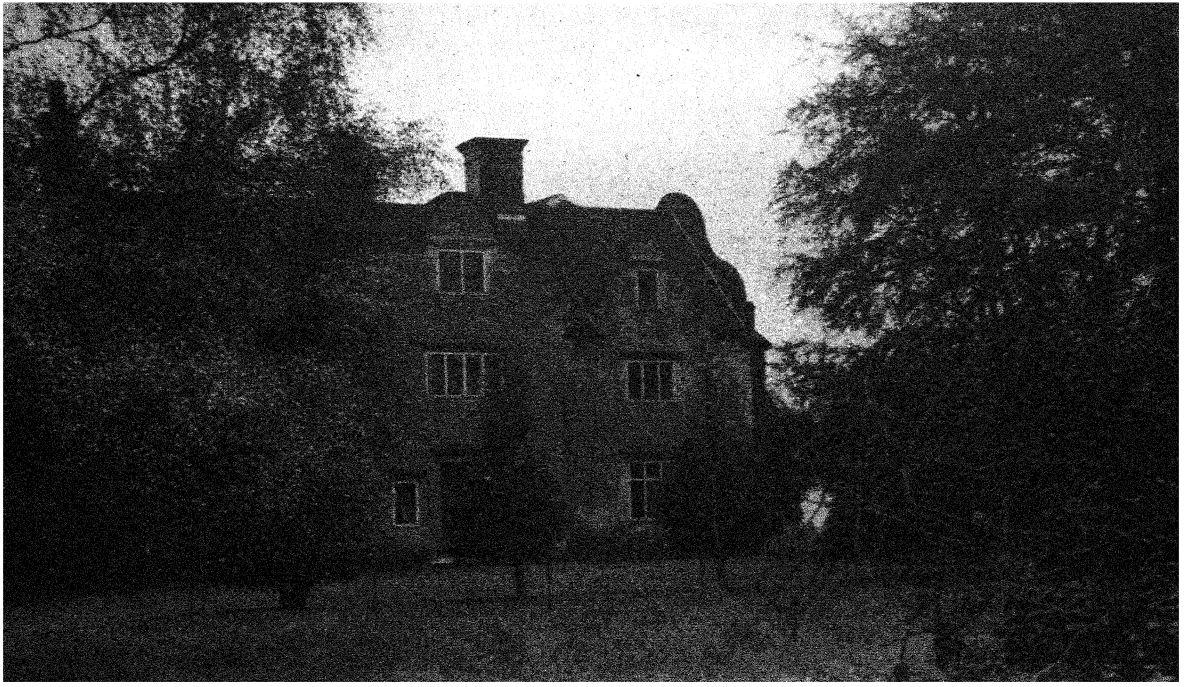
on to Broome, the next parish to Ditchingham, and then pause awhile beside the very picturesque old rectory which was the birthplace, in 1772, of Thomas Manning, that somewhat eccentric scholar and traveller who was a friend of Porson, the famous Professor of Greek at Cambridge, and afterwards of Charles Lamb. Manning spent his youth at Broome, where his father was rector, and owing to ill-health he was educated at home for the University; but after that Broome saw little or nothing of him, nor has he left us any account of how he spent his time here. It was while he was at Caius College that he met Lamb, who in the "Essays of Elia" refers to him as "my friend M., who with great painstaking got me to think I understood the first proposition of Euclid, but gave me over in despair at the second." Their friendship lasted several years, notwithstanding Manning's restless disposition making him averse to settling down anywhere for very long; when he went to Canton as an East India Company doctor, Mary Lamb wrote: "The loss of Manning made Charles very dull." Even in Canton Manning could not content himself with attending to his duties, but must needs make several unsuccessful attempts to penetrate the interior of China. Eventually he entered Bhutan and reached the frontier of Thibet, and from thence, by joining the staff of a Chinese general, he succeeded in making his way to Lhassa, which he reached in December, 1811, being the first Englishman to enter that sacred and, at that time, forbidden city. Both in China and at home he devoted himself mainly to Chinese classical literature, with the result that he came to be considered the

foremost Chinese scholar of his day. Charles Lamb, in writing to Robert Lloyd, describes Manning as—

"a dainty chiel—a man of great Power—an enchanter almost.—Far beyond Coleridge or any man in power of impressing—when he gets you alone he can act the wonders of Egypt. Only he is lazy, and does not always put forth all his strength; if he did, I know no man of genius at all comparable to him."

For some years Manning and Lamb kept up a fairly regular correspondence, and we owe to their friendship that "incomparable collection of letters," as Canon Jessopp well calls it, for the possession of which, if we had it not, we would cheerfully part with many so-called literary masterpieces. When Lamb heard of his friend's proposed journey into Central Asia, he at once played upon him with all the fountains of his abounding wit.

"The general scope of your letter afforded no indications of insanity, but some particular points raised a scruple. For God's sake don't think any more of 'Independent Tartary.' What are you to do among such Ethiopians? Is there no *lineal descendant* of Prester John? Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed? Depend upon it they'll never make you their king, as long as any branch of that great stock is remaining. I tremble for your Christianity. They will certainly circumcise you. Read Sir John Mandeville's travels to cure you, or come over to England. There is a Tartar-man now exhibiting at Exeter Change. Come and talk with him, and hear what he says first. . . . Tartar-people! Some say they are Cannibals; and then, conceive a Tartar-fellow *eating* my friend, and adding the *cool malignity* of mustard and vinegar! . . . Pray *try* and cure yourself. Take hellebore. . . .



BROOME RECTORY

THE BIRTHPLACE OF THOMAS MANNING

Shave yourself oftener. Eat no saffron, for saffron-caters contract a terrible Tartar-like yellow. *Shave the upper lip.* Go about like a European. Read no books of voyages (they are nothing but lies), only now and then a romance, to keep the fancy *under.* Above all, don't go and see any sights of *wild beasts. That has been your ruin.* . . . Have a care, my dear friend, of Anthropophagi! their stomachs are always craving. 'Tis terrible to be weighed out at fivepence a pound; to sit at table (the reverse of the fishes in Holland) not as a guest, but as a meat. God bless you: do come to England. Air and exercise may do great things. Talk with some minister. Why not your father?"

Soon after Broome has been passed through, and what was once the island of Ellingham has been skirted on its northern side, the rounded outline of Dunburgh Hill is seen projected into the valley, and presently, as we ascend a slight incline, the tower of Geldeston Church comes in sight, though almost hidden by the trees surrounding it. A few steps further, and on the opposite side of the road, a view of Geldeston Park opens out, with the large eighteenth century Hall in the background. Here it was that Edward FitzGerald so often came to sit beneath one of the trees in the park or lounge on a garden bench, spending most of his time in reading and lamenting that the pleasant days were so short and life so quickly slipped away. For the Hall was for several years the home of his sister, Mrs. Kerrich, and in the adjoining parish of Gillingham lived one of his friends, Mrs. Schutz, an old lady whom he often strolled down the road to see, and who imparted to him "the names of the stars and other chaste information." Here, too, he stayed a few days with his

wife during the few months they lived together; but that was when his life had been saddened by the death of old and dear friends and its rosy promise was dimming fast to grey. Already, too, he was beginning to realise how grave a mistake his marriage had been, and, comparing the present with the past, he may have looked back to that bright April morning in 1839, which he spent here in reading about Nero.

"Here I live in tolerable content," he wrote to John Allen: "perhaps with as much as most people arrive at, and what if one were properly grateful one would perhaps call perfect happiness. Here is a glorious sunshiny day: all the morning I read about Nero in Tacitus lying at full length on a bench in the garden: a nightingale singing, and some red anemones eyeing the sun manfully not far off. A funny mixture all this: Nero, and the delicacy of Spring: all very human, however. Then at half-past one lunch on a Cambridge cream cheese: then a ride over hill and dale: then spudding up some weeds from the grass: and then coming in, I sit down to write to you, my sister winding red worsted from the back of a chair, and the most delightful little girl in the world chattering incessantly. So runs the world away. You think I live in Epicurean ease: but this happens to be a jolly day: one isn't always well, or tolerably good, the weather is not always clear, nor nightingales singing, nor Tacitus full of pleasant atrocity. But such as life is, I believe I have got hold of a good end of it."

But after his sister Eleanor Kerrich died—her tomb is just inside one of the gates of the pretty, peaceful little churchyard—Geldeston had little attraction for him; he could never find pleasure where his surroundings suggested dead relatives or friends.

"The good die," he wrote to Mrs. Kenworthy Browne, when he heard of his sister's death: "they sacrifice themselves for others; she never thought of herself, only her children. . . . I will not go to the wretched funeral, where there are plenty of mourners; but I shall go to Geldeston when they wish me."

Above Bungay the Waveney is a very small stream, but here and there its checked waters have sufficient force to turn the wheel of a mill, while the fact of the valley being narrower enhances the charm of the scenery along some of its reaches by bringing the well-wooded uplands close to the winding stream. The country bordering the river abounds with quaint and picturesque old moated farm-houses, not a few of them being led up to by ancient lanes and trackways, which in early times were probably branches of the Roman road that crosses the river at Scole; while at Wingfield, which adjoins the riverside village of Syleham, there are interesting remains of a fine fortified manor-house, built in the fourteenth century by Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, a descendant of whom, John de la Pole, was he of whom Margaret Paston complains in one of her letters on account of his attempting to seize her husband's house at Hellesdon, near Norwich. At Scole there is still that fine old inn, the White Hart, in much the same condition externally as when Defoe saw it on his way from High Suffolk to Norwich, though its famous sign, that elaborate structure, with many allegorical devices, which spanned the road, has long since disappeared. And just across the river, on its Suffolk side, is Stuston, which in the earlier half of the eighteenth century had for its rector William Broome, a poet who by now would

be quite forgotten had he not been intimately associated with Pope, for whom he and his friend Elijah Fenton made the metrical translation of about half of the twenty-four books of the Odyssey. Broome was presented to the living of Stuston, in 1713, by Lord Cornwallis, and married a wealthy widow. During his residence there he did most of what Canon Raven calls the "sub-contracted" work for Pope, often working with Fenton, who frequently visited him, and who has revealed to us, in his letters, the remarkably mercantile arrangements which existed between Pope and his various assistants. Broome, as well as assisting in the translation, appears to have been entirely responsible for the notes; so there was much justification for the assertion made in Orator Henley's distich:

> "Pope came off clean with Homer; but they say
> Broome went before and kindly swept the way;"

but Broome, though he had a modest opinion of his own poetical and literary efforts, seems to have been very dissatisfied with the amount of the remuneration he received from Pope, and did not hesitate to say so. As a result, he found himself pilloried in the "Dunciad," and in "Bathos," and included among "the parrots who repeat another's words in such a hoarse odd tune as makes them seem their own." In the Stuston parish register we find that he was married in 1716 to Elizabeth Clarke, a widow; and that when he had a son born to him "the Right Honble Charles Lord Cornwallis & ye young Lady Mary, his sister, answered for him" at the baptism.

Having reached the little town of Diss, built around

a small mere, the explorer of the Waveney Valley has almost reached the source of the river, which rises near by, in a tract of marsh at Lopham Ford. Diss is a pleasant little town, with an interesting church; but its claim to our attention just now rests upon its having had for its rector, John Skelton, who was Poet Laureate in the reign of Henry VIII., and probably lived in a house that stood on the site of the present rectory. Skelton, who was probably a Norfolk man by birth, though his birthplace is not known, was a fairly voluminous writer whose poetical works are chiefly serious or satiric. The former have little or no appeal to us to-day, but his comic or satirical writings are characterised by true originality, and it has been said of him that in this direction "he struck out a path in literature, not very high it is true, but one in which he had no predecessors and has found no equals." That he was a bold man is witnessed to by his fearless and furious attacks on Cardinal Wolsey, against whom he became the champion of the people; that he possessed no small amount of learning is evident from the classical allusions with which his poems abound; and that many of his works are still worthy of careful study on account of their instructive examples of the colloquial English of his time, is agreed by almost every one who has read them. Even now there must be many readers who will excuse the coarseness in enjoying the genuine humour of "The Tunning of Elinour Rummyng," while Skelton's poem "On the Death of Phyllyp Sparowe," which Coleridge has described as "excellent and original," can be read with equal enjoyment. It is the story of the death of a pet sparrow kept by Jane

Scroupe, of the Benedictine nunnery at Carrow, Norwich. This unfortunate bird was killed by the nunnery cat, Gib, and in the poem, which is supposed to proceed from the mouth of the lamenting owner of the deceased pet, the whole race of cats is excommunicated and a funeral service is humorously described, in which all the birds take part. The poem is written in the characteristic "Skeltonical" metre, of which the following is a specimen :—

"That vengeaunce I aske and crye,
By way of exclamacyon,
On all the hole nacyon
Of cattes wylde and tame—
God send them sorrowe & shame!
That cat specyally
That slew so cruelly
My lytell prety sparowe,
That I brought up at Carowe."

Many witty, if somewhat coarse, tales are attributed to the "Laureate Parson of Disse," as he sometimes signed himself, one of the most printable of which concerns his reply to a "curious impertinent" man, who one day plied him with many questions.

"Syr, sayd the man, You do know well that after Chryste dyd rise from death to life, it was xl days after ere he dyd ascend into heaven, and he was but certaine times with hys discyples, and when that he dyd appeare to them, he dyd never tary longe amongst them, but sodainely vanished from them; I wolde faine Know (saith the man to Skelton) where Chryste was all these xl. dayes. Where he was, saythe Skelton, God Knoweth; He was verye busye in the woods among hys labourers that dyd make fagottes to burn heretickes, and such as thou art which doest aske such diffuse questions."

From this we can understand how it was that Webbe came to describe Skelton as "a very pleasant conceited fellow & of a very sharpe wit, exceeding bolde, & would nippe to the very quick, where he once set hold."

In a recently published paper on Skelton,[1] the Rev. C. U. Manning, of Diss, points out that in his poem "Ware the Hawke" the Laureate Rector

"gives a curious insight into the low standard of religious feeling in his days with regard to holy places and holy things. He tells us of a beneficed parson who made use of Diss Church as a place to fly his hawk—probably to train it

'A Priest unrevent,
Straight to the Sacrament
He made his Hawke to fly:
With hugeous showte & cry
The Hye Altar he strype naked.'

This 'fonde frantike falconer' swore horrible oaths, vowing that before he left the church his hawk should eat a pigeon till the blood ran raw upon the very altar stone. He bolted and barred himself in the church, but the Rector came, and very naturally and very properly strongly objected to the way in which he was amusing himself. Says Skelton—

'With a pretty gin
I fortuned to come in
This rebell to behold,
Where of him I contrould;
But he said that he wolde,
Agaynst my mind & will,
In my Church hawke still.'

While they were disputing, a huntsman threatened to

[1] In *The Antiquary*, October, 1905.

turn a fox loose in the church, and set his hounds on it, and then—

> 'Down went my offering box,
> Boke, bell, & candell,
> All that he might handell.'"

"This scandalous scene," remarks Mr. Manning, "justified Skelton in protesting against the clergy of that period, and aiding the cause of the Reformation." Naturally enough, he made many enemies, and we find that he was suspended by the Bishop of the diocese, one of the reasons given being "disobedience to the rule of clerical celibacy." But it was Wolsey who finally compelled him to seek sanctuary of Abbot Islip at Westminster, where he died in 1529, and was buried in the chancel of St. Margaret's Church.

Few people, I venture to say, read the works of Skelton nowadays, and this, it is to be feared, may also be said of those of Anna Letitia Barbauld, who, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, assisted her husband in the management of a somewhat famous boarding school at Palgrave, a small village about a mile south of Diss. Yet Mrs. Barbauld has been described as "one of the most classical, elegant, and useful writers of her time." But to-day her compilations "for the improvement of young ladies" are sadly neglected by those for whom they were especially intended, and as a writer she is chiefly remembered for her hymn in which, in describing the death of the virtuous, she has the lines—

> "So fades a summer cloud away;
> So sinks the gale when storms are o'er;
> So gently shuts the eye of day;
> So dies a wave along the shore."

But it must not be forgotten that she was the editor of the "Letters" of the novelist Richardson; nor that Wordsworth is said to have coveted her lines—

> "Life, I know not what thou art,
> But know that thou and I must part:
> And when or how and where we met
> I own to me is secret yet.
> Life! we have been long together,
> Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
> 'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
> Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;
> Then steal away, give little warning;
> Choose thine own time,
> Say not 'Good night,' but in some brighter clime
> Bid me 'Good morning.'"

The Barbaulds' school at Palgrave would have been a far from flourishing institution had it not been for Anna Barbauld's peculiar fitness for managing and instructing boys; but thanks to her it soon attained a considerable reputation. Among its scholars were the first Lord Denman, Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench; Sir William Gell, the antiquary; Dr. Sayers, who, as Sir Walter Scott said, "united the patience of the antiquarian with the genius of the poet"; and William Taylor, to whom his old school-mistress afterwards wrote, "Do you know that you made Walter Scott a poet? So he told me the other day. It was, he says, your ballad of 'Lenore' that inspired him." But at least one contemporary valuation of Mrs. Barbauld's abilities as an educationalist was an exceedingly low one.

"Knowledge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. Barbauld's books convey, it seems," wrote Charles Lamb, "must come to a child in the *shape of knowledge;* and

his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers when he has learnt that a horse is an animal, and Billy is better than a horse, and such like ; instead of that beautiful interest in wild tales, which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. . . . Hang them ! I mean the cursed Barbauld crew, those blights and blasts of all that is human in man and child."

CHAPTER XV

BURY ST. EDMUNDS

St. Edmundsbury—Monastic times—Jocelin of Brakelond—A "born Boswell"—Abbot Samson—King John—The Abbot and King Richard—John Lydgate—His acquaintance with Chaucer—His poems—Gray's estimate of Lydgate—James Russell Lowell—Matthew Hopkins the "witch-finder"—The Lowestoft witches—Sir Thomas Browne brings about their execution—Daniel Defoe—Bury Fair—Cox Macro—Messenger Monsey.

THERE still clings to the ancient town of St. Edmundsbury something of that atmosphere of cloistral calm and gothic gravity which befits a place owing its historical importance to monastic influence, and a large part of its abiding charm and interest to the associations with it of quiet, studious men who spent here reclusive lives. Its magnificent and richly-endowed abbey has for centuries been represented by little more than two well-preserved gateways and some almost shapeless fragments of crumbling walls, and the supposed miraculous events by which the shrine of East Anglia's Martyr-King became widely renowned have long since come to be treated as idle tales; but the story of St. Edmundsbury's past has an irresistible fascination, and the town itself retains a sufficing measure of its mediæval tranquillity to preserve for it a harmonious relationship with its past. In its Abbey Grounds, still partly surrounded by their original

wall, a Hugh de Northwold might plan undisturbed just such another beautiful presbytery as he built at Ely; by the side of the little river Lark a Lydgate might woo the muse of poetry with little fear of interruption. For now, as ever, Bury is a self-centred, self-reliant town. Contentedly, it devotes itself to its own interests, but lags in the wake of progress. The chief town of West Suffolk, it has no ambition to wider distinction than its past has given it and its present maintains; consequently, we find it more concerned about the precise location of an abbot's tomb than in schemes of modern improvement. We feel while walking its streets and loitering amid its Abbey ruins that the influence of its monkish rulers has not yet ceased to be exerted in it—that the Bury St. Edmunds of to-day is still the St. Edmundsbury of monastic times.

In inquiring into the early literary associations of Bury, it is useless to seek them elsewhere than in connection with the famous Benedictine monastery. That wealthy religious house numbered among its inmates, at one time or another, several distinguished men; but the names of two of its monks, Jocelin of Brakelond and John Lydgate, stand out far more boldly than the rest, save that of Abbot Samson, whom Jocelin has immortalised. Yet even the name of Jocelin was almost unknown, save to a few students and historians, until 1843, when Carlyle, having seized upon a gossipy yet invaluable chronicle, embodied the greater part of it in his "Past and Present." Previously, John Gage Rokewode had printed, through the Camden Society, the text of the Chronicle in the original Latin, and it was of this edition Carlyle made such good use; but the



THE ABBOT'S BRIDGE, BURY ST. EDMUNDS

publication of "Past and Present" awakened so great an interest in the Bury monk and the sturdy Abbot Samson, whose biographer he was, that an English version was at once called for, and was provided by Thomas Edlyne Tomlins. Since then another translation, with valuable notes, has been issued by Sir Ernest Clarke, and the "Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond" is now well within the reach of every reader who may care to make the acquaintance of Jocelin and get a glimpse into the inner life of a famous monastery.

There are many monkish chronicles, but only a few of them are so written as to be attractive to the general reader of to-day; most of them are matter for the antiquary and historian alone. The popularity of Jocelin is partly due to his own personality and partly to the striking and masterful personality of the Abbot with whose sayings and doings the Chronicle is chiefly concerned. Carlyle speaks of Jocelin as a "born Boswell," a terse description of him which in itself is enough to make us turn to him with some eagerness; but he also gives us a shrewd estimate of the monk's character: "An ingenious and ingenuous, a cheery-hearted, innocent, yet withal shrewd, noticing, quick-witted man; and from under his monk's cowl has looked out on the narrow section of the world in a really human manner. . . . The man is of patient, peaceable, loving, clear-smiling nature; open for this or that. . . . Also he has a pleasant wit, and loves a timely joke, though in mild, subdued manner. A learned, grown man, yet with the heart as of a good child."

There is every probability that Jocelin of Brakelond was a native of Bury, where there are still two streets

known as Long and Short Brackland or Braklond; but we know nothing of his life before 1173, when he became a monk of St. Edmundsbury, and was taken charge of by Samson, then master of the novices. By the time that Samson was elected Abbot, Jocelin had become prior's chaplain; but before the new Abbot had been four months in office he made the chronicler his chaplain. After the death of Samson, we hear of Jocelin as "our almoner, a man of exalted piety, powerful in word and in deed"; and he appears to have taken a prominent part in the discussions which preceded the appointment of a new abbot; but apart from a remark he makes to the effect that he had written an account of the signs and wonders which followed the martyrdom of the boy Robert by the Jews, he tells us practically nothing about himself, though we are justified in assuming that he was a quiet-loving man, without ambition, unless it was to win the praise of future generations.

That the description "born Boswell," or "Jocelin Boswell" was aptly applied to our chronicler by Carlyle is easily appreciated when we read passages like that in which he relates how he complained one day to Abbot Samson that he showed a far more amiable side of his character to people whom he met abroad than to those with whom he dwelt in the monastery.

"'When you are at home,' said Jocelin, 'you do not exhibit the same gracious demeanour you do when elsewhere, nor do you mix in society with those brethren who have a strong regard for you, and have chosen you for their lord; but contrariwise, you seldom associate with them, nor do you, as they say, make yourself on sociable terms with them.' Hearing this, he changed

countenance, and, hanging down his head, said 'You are a simpleton, and speak foolishly; you ought to know what Solomon says—"You have many sons: it is not fit you should smile on them!"' I indeed held my peace from thenceforth, putting a bridle on my tongue. On another occasion I said, 'My lord, I heard thee this night after matins wakeful and sighing heavily, contrary to thy usual wont,' who answered, 'No wonder; thou art partaker of my good things, in meat and drink, in riding abroad, and such like, but you have little need to care concerning the conduct of the house and household of the saints, and arduous business of the pastoral care which harasses me and makes my spirit to groan and be heavy.' Whereto I, lifting up my hands to heaven, made answer, 'From such anxiety, almighty and most merciful Lord, deliver me.'"

But much as Jocelin tells us, both about the abbot and the abbey affairs, it must be admitted that Carlyle is right in saying that he is an imperfect mirror of the monastic life of his time. He chats complacently about what pleases or interests him; but too often he is utterly negligent of what will interest the reader of his Chronicle seven hundred years after he has laid the pen aside and left the scriptorium for ever. As Carlyle says, "We have a longing always to cross-question him, to force from him an explanation of much." So in the second book of "Past and Present," in which there is so much inspired by him, we find Carlyle filling in the blank spaces he discovers in the old Chronicle, or at least doing his best to read between the lines.

"Those clear eyes of neighbour Jocelin," he says, "looked on the bodily presence of King John: the very

John *Sansterre*, or Lackland, who signed *Magna Charta* afterwards at Runnymead. Lackland, with a great retinue, boarded once, for the matter of a fortnight, in St. Edmundsbury Convent; daily in the very eyesight, palpable to the very fingers of our Jocelin: O Jocelin, what did he say, what did he do; how looked he, lived he;—at the very lowest, what coat or breeches had he on? Jocelin is obstinately silent. Jocelin marks down what interests *him;* entirely deaf to *us.* With Jocelin's eyes we discern almost nothing of John Lackland. As through a glass darkly, we with our own eyes and appliances, intensely looking, discern at most: A blustering, dissipated human figure, with a kind of blackguardly quality air, in cramoisy velvet, or other uncertain texture, uncertain cut, with much plumage and fringing; amid numerous other human figures of the like; riding abroad with hawks; talking noisy nonsense;—tearing out the bowels of St. Edmundsbury Convent (its larders, namely, and cellars) in the most ruinous way, by living at rack and manger there. Jocelin notes only, with a slight subacidity of manner, that the King's Majesty, *Dominus Rex,* did leave, as gift for our St. Edmund Shrine, a handsome enough silk cloak,—or rather pretended to leave, for one of his retinue borrowed it of us, and *we* never got sight of it again; and, on the whole, that the *Dominus Rex,* at departing, gave us 'thirteen *sterlingii,*' one shilling and one penny, to say a mass for him; and so departed, —like a shabby Lackland as he was!"

But in writing of what interested him, Jocelin is never neglectful of details, even to the extent of noting the prominence of St. Edmund's nose and the number of nails by which the lid of his coffin was fastened down; and however quickly he may dismiss from his mind the visit of a John Lackland, he ever delights

in recording the sayings and doings of his hero, the Abbot. To quote Carlyle again—

"How Abbot Samson, giving his new subjects seriatim the kiss of fatherhood in the St. Edmundsbury chapterhouse, proceeded with cautious energy to set about reforming their disjointed, distracted way of life; how he managed with his fifty rough Milites (Feudal Knights), with his lazy farmers, remiss refractory monks, with Pope's Legates, Viscounts, Bishops, Kings; how on all sides he laid about him like a man, and putting consequence on premiss, and everywhere the saddle on the right horse, struggled incessantly to educe organic method out of lazily fermenting wreck,—the careful reader will discern, not without true interest, in these pages of Jocelin Boswell."

And Abbot Samson was well worthy of his chronicler, as might be easily proved, were not the fact well established, and we not concerned here with other matters. He was a "strong" man in the best sense of the word, and in taking leave of Jocelin of Brakelond, that most reliable of chroniclers, we can hardly do better than quote, as an example of his style, his account of Abbot Samson's way of dealing with a king—

"Adam of Cockfield dying, left for his heir a daughter of three months old; and the abbot gave the wardship as belonging to his fee, to whom he would. Now King Richard, being solicited by some of his courtiers, anxiously sought for the wardship and the child for the use of some one of his servants; at one time by letter, at another time by messengers. But the abbot answered that he had given the ward away, and had confirmed his gift by his charter; and sending his own messenger to the King, he did all he could, *prece et precio*, to mitigate his wrath. And the King

made answer that he would avenge himself upon that proud abbot who had thwarted him, were it not for reverence of St. Edmund, whom he feared. Therefore, the messenger returning, the abbot very wisely passed over the King's threats without notice, and said, 'Let the King send, if he will, and seize the ward; he has the strength and power of doing his will, indeed of taking away the whole abbey. I shall never be bent to his will in this matter, nor by me shall this ever be done. For the thing that is most to be apprehended is, lest such things by consequence be drawn to the prejudice of my successors. On this business, depend upon it, I will give the King no money. Let the Lord Most High look to it. Whatever may befall, I will patiently bear with.' Now, therefore, many were saying and believing that the King was exasperated against the abbot; but lo! the King wrote quite in a friendly way to the abbot, and requested that he would give him some of his dogs. The abbot, not unmindful of that saying of the wise man—

> 'Munera (crede mihi) capiunt hominesque deosque
> Placatur donis Jupiter ipse datis,'

sent the dogs as the King requested, and moreover, sent some horses and other valuable gifts, which, when the King had graciously accepted, he in public most highly commended the honesty and fidelity of the abbot, and also sent to the abbot by his messengers a ring of great price, which our lord the Pope, Innocent the Third, of his great grace had given him, to wit, being the very first gift that had been offered after his consecration. Also, by his writ, he rendered him many thanks for the presents he had sent him."

Just over two hundred years after Jocelin of Brakelond was admitted as a novice into the monastery of St. Edmundsbury, there was born at Lydgate, a village

about six miles from Bury, one who was also destined to become a Benedictine of the famous abbey and to distinguish himself more than any other monk who ever dwelt within its walls. This was John of Lidgate or John Lydgate, who himself tells us in his "Fall of Princes," that he was—

> "Born in a village which is called Lidgate
> In olden times a famous castle town
> In Danes times it was beaten down
> Time when St. Edmund Martyr Maid and King
> Was slain at Hoxne."

Unlike Jocelin, who wrote for posterity alone, John Lydgate received in his lifetime the due reward of his labours; for he was a popular poet of his day, and had the advantage of the assistance of Caxton in bringing his works before the public. He had, too, the advantage of travel; for, after spending a short time at Oxford, he visited France, and, possibly, Italy, and acquainted himself with their languages and literature, making a special study of Dante and Boccaccio, though, according to Mr. Sidney Lee, his foreign tours seem to have been undertaken rather "in the spirit of an adventurous sightseer than in the pursuit of academic learning."

Lydgate began rhyming at an early age, and it was not long before he became personally acquainted with Chaucer, whose disciple he called himself, and to whom he submitted his poems in manuscript so long as the poet was able to peruse them. He was admitted to the Abbey of St. Edmundsbury when only fifteen years old; so it would seem that, notwithstanding his being, as he tells us, an unruly boy who preferred robbing

orchards and "telling" cherry stones to going to church, he must early have revealed himself exceptionally gifted. Shortly after his return from abroad, he opened a school, probably in the abbey, for the sons of noblemen; and subsequently he distinguished himself as a teacher of mathematics, astronomy, and rhetoric. But his fame chiefly rested on his poetical works, the most popular of which was his "History, Siege and Destruction of Troy," which was undertaken at the command of Henry IV., but, owing to its not being completed until after that king's death, dedicated to his successor Henry V. The manuscript copy of this poem, which was presented to the King, is now in the Bodleian Library. Almost equally popular was his "Fall of Thebes," which was written in continuation of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," and is printed at the end of old editions of that work. To the inhabitants of Bury his most interesting poem is his "Life of St. Edmund," which contains, in addition to the legendary life of the Martyr King, a history of the abbey, a description of the famous shrine, and a regular enumeration of the abbots, with remarks on each. The manuscript copy of this poem is in the British Museum. It was presented by Lydgate to Henry VI., and is one of the most beautiful manuscripts of that and any other period. It is written on vellum and splendidly illuminated, having no less than one hundred and twenty limnings in rich and exquisite colours. In the British Museum is also preserved a splendid manuscript copy of Lydgate's "Fall of Princes," illustrated with a portrait of the author and several miniatures.

There have been many and various estimates made

of Lydgate's poetical skill. One of his greatest admirers was the poet Gray, who said of him—

"I pretend not to set him on a level with Chaucer, but he certainly comes the nearest to him of any contemporary writer I am acquainted with. His choice of expression, and the smoothness of his verse, far surpass both Gower and Occleve. He wanted not art in raising the more tender emotions of the mind."

Against this estimate we have that of Ritson, who found Lydgate "a most prolix and voluminous poetaster," and elsewhere describes him as a "prosaic and drivelling monk." The late James Russell Lowell, too, in writing of Chaucer, declares that in order to understand fully how much he achieved, one should subject one's self to a "penitential course" of his contemporary Gower, or listen for a moment to the "barbarous jangle which Lydgate and Occleve contrive to draw from the instrument their master had tuned so deftly." Chaucer's verse, he adds, "differs from that of Gower and Lydgate precisely as the verse of Spenser differs from that of Gascoigne, and for the same reason —that he was a great poet, to whom measure was a natural vehicle." Between these very different appraisements, we may perhaps find the truth in that of Mr. Sidney Lee, who writes—

"The tedious length of his narrative poems renders them unreadable, and, from a literary point of view, worthless. His moralising, usually in allegorical form, is unimpressive, although the piety which inspires it is obviously sincere. He shows to best advantage in his shorter poems on social subjects, like 'London Lackpenny' or the ballad on the 'Forked Headdresses of the

Ladies' ('A dyte on Womenhis hornys'), or 'A Satirical Description of his Lady when she hath on Hire Hood of Grene.' There occasionally he exhibits a frolicsome vein of satire, as well as an insight into the weaknesses of human nature. Elsewhere he shows some sympathy with rural life and natural scenery, and although he delights in exposing women's foibles, he refers to them in his serious poems in terms of genuine respect. Despite the depression which all but a small fragment of his literary work excites in the reader, Lydgate may fairly be credited with a genial personality."

A few years ago antiquarian inquisitiveness, directed towards the site of the chapter-house of the abbey, resulted in the disturbance of the bones of six of the abbots of St. Edmundsbury, including those of the famous Samson; but the graves of Jocelin and Lydgate, though probably somewhere within the "botanic expanses," as Carlyle called them, of the abbey grounds, have never been intentionally disturbed, for their position is unknown. But fragments of the grand old abbey remain, and with them the names of Jocelin and Lydgate will be associated so long as one stone rests upon another; for among the many shadowy forms we dimly see when we peer into the early history of St. Edmundsbury these two monks stand out more clearly than the rest by reason of their works, in which they have shown us something of themselves as well as of their times.

Some three hundred years after Lydgate's death, when Edmund Calamy, the celebrated divine, was the "preacher" in St. Mary's Church, which stands south of the Norman tower, Matthew Hopkins, the scoundrelly "witch-finder," brought to Bury, from all parts of the

neighbourhood, a number of unfortunate persons who were reputed to be wizards or witches; and not a few of these unfortunates were condemned by certain commissioners (of whom Calamy was one), and suffered death for their supposed iniquities. Subsequently these proceedings, worthy of a Zulu witch-doctor, were moderated in consequence of the exposure of Hopkins's fraudulent practices; but even so late as 1664 there were tried at Bury, on a charge of witchcraft, two poor women from Lowestoft, Amy Duny and Rose Cullender by name, and the judge on that occasion was Sir Matthew Hale, the Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer. In the opinion of certain ignorant folk, these women had, with evil intent, bewitched some children; but it is only fair to the judge to say that he appears to have had grave doubts on the subject. Unfortunately, however, there happened to be staying in Bury at the time no less a celebrity than Sir Thomas Browne, the author of "Religio Medici"; and while the trial was in progress he was present in the court. Not being satisfied with the evidence, Sir Matthew Hale requested Sir Thomas Browne, as "a person of great knowledge," to state his opinion of it; and, having examined the children who were said to have been the women's victims, Sir Thomas gravely asserted that he had no doubt about their being bewitched.

"In Denmark," he added, "there had lately been a great discovery of witches, who used the very same way of afflicting persons by conveying pins into them, and crooked, as these pins were, with needles and nails. And his opinion was that the devil in such cases did

natural foundation, that is, to stir up and excite such humours superabounding in their bodies to a great excess, whereby he did in an extraordinary manner afflict them with such distempers as their bodies were most subject to, as particularly appeared in these children; for he conceived that these swouning fits were natural, and nothing else but they call the mother, but only heightened to a great excess by the subtility of the devil, co-operating with the malice of these which we term witches, at whose instance he doth these villanies."

These statements, backed by the reputation of the unexpected witness, settled the fate of Amy Duny and Rose Cullender, who were condemned and executed. That their blood is upon the head of the worthy Norwich doctor and scholar no one can deny; but it must be remembered that, in believing in the existence of witchcraft, Browne's credulity was no greater than that of nearly all learned men of his day. The general belief regarding it was clearly stated by Hale in his direction to the jury. He said—

"That there were such creatures as witches he made no doubt at all. *First*, the Scripture had affirmed so much. *Secondly*, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence in such a crime."

Nearly forty years after a casual visit of Sir Thomas Browne to Bury had had such terrible consequences for the two reputed witches, the ancient monastic town entertained for a while a famous personage in that popular romancer and pugnacious pamphleteer, Daniel Defoe, then only recently released from Newgate, where he

had been imprisoned for publishing his "Shortest Way with the Dissenters." Local tradition points to a house, called Cupola House, on the east side of the Meat Market, as having been occupied by him; but there is no trustworthy record of this, and it is probable that his name has been confused with that of Dr. Cox Macro, the antiquary, who is known to have lived in the house. Defoe, who during his stay in Bury attended services conducted by the Presbyterians in a room in Abbeygate Street, was much delighted with the town and townsfolk.

"It is a town," he wrote, "famed for its pleasant situation and wholesome air, the Montpelier of Suffolk, and perhaps of England;" but, he adds, "the beauty of this town consists in the number of gentry who dwell in and near it, the polite conversation among them, the affluence and plenty they live in, and the pleasant country they have to go abroad in."

He was very indignant that a recent writer should have attempted to besmirch the fair fame of the ladies of Bury and its neighbourhood by suggesting that they went to Bury Fair as to a matrimonial market, and that the assemblies held during the Fair seldom ended "without some considerable match or intrigue." He admitted that he did not like the assemblies; but that the women who attended them deserved the "terrible character" given them he could not believe.

"Having the opportunity to see the fair at Bury," he wrote, "and to see that there were, indeed, abundance of the finest ladies, or as fine as any in Britain, yet I must own that the number of the ladies at the comedy, or at the assembly, is in no way equal to the number that are seen in the town, much less are they

equal to the whole body of the ladies in the three counties; and I must also add, that though it is far from true that all that appear at the assembly are there for matches or intrigues, yet I will venture to say that they are not the worst of the ladies who stay away, neither are they the fewest in number or the meanest in beauty, but just the contrary; and I do not at all doubt but that the scandalous liberty some take at those assemblies will in time bring them out of credit with the virtuous part of the sex here, as it has done already in Kent and other places, and that those ladies who most value their reputation will be seen less there than they have been; for though the institution of them has been innocent and virtuous, the ill use of them will in time arm virtue against them, and they will be laid down as they have been set up without much satisfaction."

Cox Macro, who was an alderman of the borough, was a great collector of curiosities and old manuscripts, among the latter being several which formerly belonged to Sir Henry Spelman, the Elizabethan antiquary, and to the library of the Abbey of St. Edmundsbury. Some of these are now in the possession of Mr. J. H. Gurney, of Keswick, and are described in a report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. Macro was in frequent correspondence with eminent literary men and artists of his day, and a collection of his letters is preserved in the British Museum. His rather curious name was a frequent occasion of witticisms on the part of his friends, one of whom suggested as an appropriate motto for his family, "Cocks may crow." Contemporary with him was the eccentric Messenger Monsey, the freethinking Whig physician, who for a while occupied the Manor House. It was while he was living

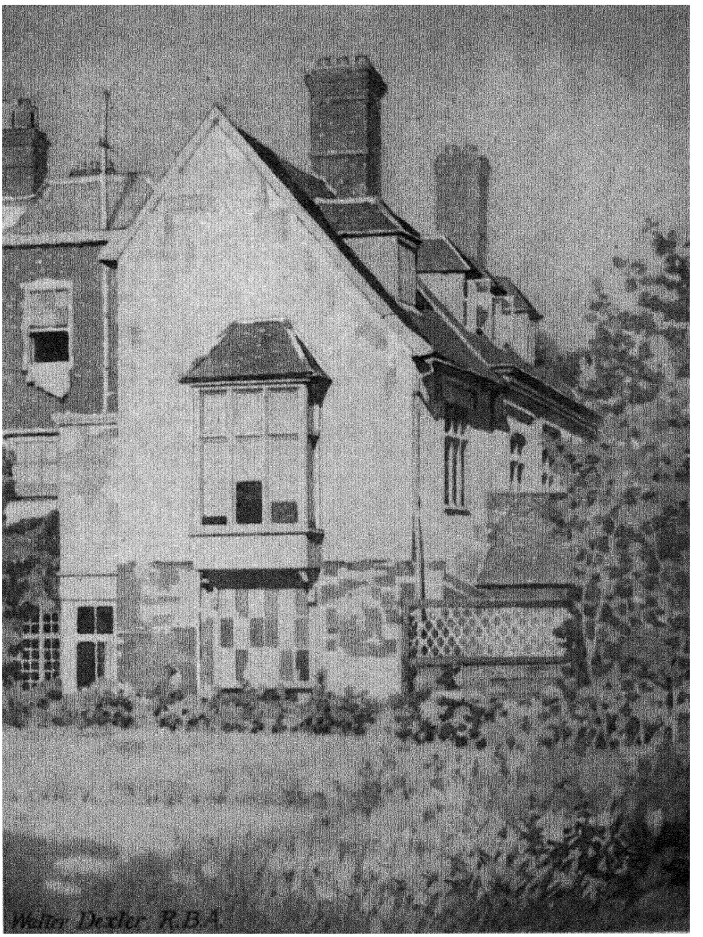
in Bury that he was fortunate enough to be called in to attend the Earl of Godolphin, who induced him to go to London, where he became a friend of Garrick and Elizabeth Montagu, but failed to find favour in the eyes of Dr. Johnson, who greatly disapproved of his "loose style of conversation."

CHAPTER XVI

BURY ST. EDMUNDS—*continued*

Bury Grammar School — Its distinguished scholars — Dr. Donaldson — Crabb Robinson — Dr. Gordon Hake — William Bodham Donne—His removal to Bury—Entertains Borrow—Borrow and Donaldson—"Hebrew in five minutes"—Gordon Hake and Borrow—"The Romany Rye"—FitzGerald at Bury—FitzGerald and Borrow—Borrow and Agnes Strickland—Thackeray and Borrow at Hardwick—FitzGerald's last visit to Bury—The Angel Inn—Mr. Pickwick and Alfred Jingle—Mr. Pickwick's adventure at the young ladies' school—Henry Cockton—Madame de Genlis—Fanny Burney—Elizabeth Inchbald.

BURY Grammar School, now conducted in an imposing building standing on the site of the Abbey vineyard, has a high reputation, owing to the considerable number of distinguished men who have been included among its scholars; but the schoolhouse, which was so well remembered by its "old boys," is a long old building in Northgate Street, now used as a girls' school. In this schoolhouse—into which the school was removed in 1665 and there conducted until 1883—were educated, during the eighteenth century, Sir Thomas Hanmer, the first editor of Shakespeare; Cumberland, the author of "The Observer"; and G. Pretyman Tomline, Bishop of Winchester, the tutor and biographer of Pitt; while other scholars who subsequently distinguished themselves were Bunbury the caricaturist, Laurence Brockett



BURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

WHERE EDWARD FITZGERALD WAS A SCHOLAR

and Dr. Symonds, both of whom occupied the chair of Modern History at Cambridge; and Butts and Thurlow, bishops respectively of Ely and Durham. During the earlier half of the nineteenth century the school's reputation was well maintained, especially under the headmastership of Dr. B. H. Malkin and the famous Dr. J. W. Donaldson, author of "Theatre of the Greeks." Then it was that those firm friends and variously gifted men, J. M. Kemble, the historian of the Anglo-Saxons; James Spedding, the editor of Bacon; William Bodham Donne, the licenser of plays; and Edward FitzGerald, of "Omar Khayyám" fame, were boys together at the old Bury school, as was also FitzGerald's brother Peter, who chiefly distinguished himself by driving the Bury coach and, on one occasion, a hearse with four horses. Dr. Malkin, to whom there is a monument in St. James's Church, is not so well remembered, perhaps, as his sons, Frederick, the historian of Greece, and Sir Benjamin Heath Malkin, the friend of Macaulay; but the name of Dr. Donaldson is even now frequently on the tongue of certain Bury folk, who, pointing to some memorial inscriptions on the ruins in one of the churchyards, love to tell that tale of him which is told in the "Life" of Henry Crabb Robinson. The tale is to the effect that there were in Bury three brothers of the name of Creed, and they were commonly known as "the three Creeds." Crabb Robinson was strolling with Donaldson in the town one day, when one of the brothers was seen walking in front of them with his hands behind his back. "There goes Athanasian Creed," remarked the doctor. "How do you know?" asked his companion. "Why, by his damnation claws (clause)."

Dr. Gordon Hake, who, like Lamb's friend Crabb Robinson, lived in Bury, knew Dr. Donaldson well, and in his "Memoirs of Eighty Years" has left us a striking pen-picture of him—

"When I call up Donaldson's head and face," he writes, "and see a large, wide, overhanging forehead, big enough to be hydrocephalic, a forehead such as one meets with in cases of epilepsy and in cases of genius alike, I pause before criticizing its function; and such was Donaldson's forehead, whilst his mouth was the mouth of Punch. Its laugh, almost always silent, seemed loud, and suppressed only to make it last the longer. There was more going on always under that forehead of his than in any half-dozen brains of the common type. Fortunate for him was it that the mental workings are inaudible, or he would have been stunned by his own thoughts; so busy were they at all times and so noisy. He was a work of Nature, a thinking and sensitive machine, which, set going, must work on like the rapidest wheel moved by steam; so rapid sometimes as to acquire invisibility as it revolved before your eyes. The fly-wheel . . . in him was vanity, and it never allowed its machinery to pause; it was, therefore, quite impossible for it to ask itself if it went wrong when it never stopped. All Donaldson knew about right and wrong was that what he achieved was perfect . . . that, even if a little wrong, the reason was not quite within reach of vulgar scrutiny."

William Bodham Donne, a quiet, scholarly man, better known to-day as a friend and correspondent of FitzGerald than as an author and critic, went back to his home at Mattishall in Norfolk after leaving Cambridge, and there married a niece of Cowper's "Johnny (Johnson) of Norfolk;" but in 1846 he moved into

Bury, where he lived in Westgate House, adjoining the Theatre in Westgate Street, and had a near neighbour in Crabb Robinson, whom he valued for himself as well as for his reminiscences of Wordsworth and Lamb. Writing to Trench, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, a few days before leaving Mattishall, he referred to the great number of goods and chattels three generations of Donnes had accumulated there, and humorously added—

"I am sure when the people at Bury see what I bring, they will set me down for a retired pawnbroker, and when the visitors of my auction see what I leave, they will think Noah is selling off his fixtures and furniture from the Ark."

From 1846 until 1852, when Donne was appointed librarian of the London Library, his house in Westgate Street was often resorted to by well-known literary men, among whom were FitzGerald, Bernard Barton, and George Borrow.

Borrow was the guest of Donne here in 1848, when the latter wrote to one of his friends—

"We have had a great man here . . . and I have been walking with him and aiding him to eat salmon and mutton and drink port . . . George Borrow . . . and what is more we fell in with some gypsies, and I heard the speech of Egypt, which sounded wondrously like a medley of broken Spanish and dog Latin. Borrow's face, lighted up by the red turf fire of the tent, was worth looking at. He is ashy-white now . . . but twenty years ago, when his hair was like a raven's wing, he must have been hard to discriminate from a born Bohemian. Borrow is best on the tramp: if you can

walk 4½ miles per hour, as I can with ease and do by choice, and can walk 15 of them at a stretch . . . which I can compass also . . . then he will talk Iliads of adventures even better than his printed ones. He cannot abide those Amateur Pedestrians who saunter, and in his chair he is given to groan and be contradictory. But on Newmarket-heath, in Rougham Woods, he is at home, and specially when he meets with a thorough vagabond like your present correspondent."

Donne undoubtedly had a way of keeping Borrow in a good humour, as had FitzGerald and Hake; and if they laughed at his airs and eccentricities, it was behind his back. Mr. Mowbray Donne, who can remember Borrow's visits to his father's house, has said that the greater the man Borrow came in touch with the more rudely he behaved, and he records an encounter between him and Dr. Donaldson. The latter having expressed doubt as to whether a certain roving painter was, as he professed to be, a native of Hungary, Borrow settled the matter by saying that he had been talking with the painter for two hours that morning in the language of that country; and then he suddenly turned to the learned doctor and said: "That comes, Dr. Donaldson, of *larning* Hebrew in five minutes." Commenting on this, Mr. Mowbray Donne pointedly asks, which of the two—Borrow or Donaldson—would have proved to be the better scholar could they there and then have been examined by a competent board of examiners?

About three years after Donne first met Borrow at Bury, Hake and Donne came to his rescue when, in consequence of some unfavourable notices, the publication of his "Lavengro" seemed destined to be almost

ignored by the public. Hake had been greatly impressed by the book—"'Lavengro's' roots will strike deep into the soil of English letters," he wrote to a friend at the time—and he at once persuaded Ainsworth to let him eulogize Borrow in the "New Monthly"; while Donne, in the pages of Tait's "Edinburgh Magazine," made a favourable estimate of the qualities of Borrow's "dream of adventure," and urged him to complete and publish speedily the concluding portion of the book, which appeared in 1857 under the title of "The Romany Rye." Writing to Mrs. Borrow from Bury in March, 1851, Hake enclosed a proof of his article, and remarked upon it, "You are not to suppose from Mr. Ainsworth's notice that I have claimed any supernatural acquaintance with the facts of Mr. Borrow's life: it is a mere inference drawn from the character of my review and, perhaps, from my mention of Mr. Borrow being a friend of mine, which I hope is true;—unless some day while walking he should stop as Petulengro did, and tell me I must fight—in which case I should come off second best!" In describing Borrow as he knew him then, Dr. Hake says: "His figure was tall, and his bearing very noble; he had a finely moulded head and thick white hair—white from his youth; his brown eyes were soft yet piercing; his nose somewhat of the 'semitic' type, which gave his face the cast of the young Memnon. His mouth had a generous curve; and his features, for beauty and true power, were such as can have no parallel in our portrait gallery."

FitzGerald met Borrow at Donne's house in October, 1856, and heard him read a long translation he had made from the Turkish. In return, FitzGerald lent him

Cowell's manuscript of "Omar Khayyám"; but he was not attracted by Borrow, who, we are told, "repelled him by his masterful manner and uncertain temper." Of his behaviour when he lost his temper, Dr. Hake has told us something in his "Memoirs," partly of his own knowledge and partly on the authority of Donne. One of the victims of his rudeness was Agnes Strickland, who hearing, while at a reception at Bury, that he was in the room, asked Donne to introduce him to her. Borrow unwillingly consented, and sat down beside her. Before long she began to praise his books, and asked him whether she might send him a copy of her "Queens of England." Her astonishment can be imagined when she received the reply, "For God's sake, don't, madame; I should not know where to put them or what to do with them." Then "he rose, fuming, as was his wont when offended, and said to Mr. Donne, 'What a damned fool that woman is!'"

On another occasion Borrow and Dr. Hake were dining at Hardwick House, the residence of Sir Thomas Cullum, a fine old seventeenth-century house, about a mile from Bury. Among the guests was Thackeray.

"At that date," writes Dr. Hake, "Thackeray had made money by lectures on the Satirists, and was in good swing; but he never could realize the independent feelings of those who happened to be born to fortune, a thing which a man of genius should be able to do with ease. He told Lady Cullum, which she repeated to me, that no one could conceive how it mortified him to be making a provision for his daughters by delivering lectures; and I thought she rather sympathized with him in this his degradation. He approached Borrow, who, however, received him very dryly. As a last

attempt to get up a conversation with him, he said, 'Have you read my Snob Papers in *Punch?*' 'In *Punch?*' asked Borrow. 'It is a periodical I never look at! . . . Thackeray, as if under the impression that the party was invited to look at him, thought it necessary to make a figure, and absorb attention during the dessert, by telling stories and more than half acting them; the aristocratic party listening, but appearing little amused. Borrow knew better how to behave in good company, and kept quiet; though, doubtless, he felt his mane."

The departure of Dr. Hake and W. Bodham Donne for London caused a break-up of the little literary coterie at Bury. No one regretted this more than FitzGerald, for Donne was one of his firmest friends.

"If FitzGerald has become more attached to Bury, Bury so far as it knows him is equally attached to him," wrote Donne. "His company would make one indifferent to a smoking chimney. His great fault is that he gives so little of it."

Some time after Donne's departure, FitzGerald wrote to him:

"W. Airy came over some ten days ago, and I afterwards went with him to have a long day's ramble over our old haunts *at Bury*, the school, the church, etc. I looked at your old house by the Theatre with some sadness; and did not forget poor Donaldson in looking at the school."

With the "old house by the Theatre" closed to him, FitzGerald usually, when he came to Bury, stayed at the Angel Inn, on Angel Hill, nearly opposite the Abbey Gate; but on the occasion of his last visit to

the town which had for him so many pleasant associations, he had time only to stroll as far as the old schoolhouse in Northgate Street, before continuing his journey to the rectory of his friend Crabbe at Merton, in Norfolk. It was the last walk he ever took; for before the next day dawned he had "passed the door of Darkness through."

The Angel Inn! Every one in Suffolk knows the Angel Inn at Bury, and it is equally well known to a great many people outside Suffolk. Years ago, according to the annals of the Pickwick Club, it was known to that "gentleman of fortune," Mr. Alfred Jingle, who was responsible for no less a distinguished personage than Mr. Pickwick taking up his abode for a while beneath its roof. It was by the coach from Eatanswill (Ipswich) that Mr. Pickwick and the inimitable Sam Weller, little recking of the trouble in store for them, entered Bury on a fine day in August.

"The coach rattled through the well-paved streets of a handsome little town, of thriving and cleanly appearance, and stopped before a large inn situated in a wide open street, nearly facing the old abbey.

"'And this,' said Mr. Pickwick, looking up, 'is the Angel. We alight here, Sam. But some caution is necessary. Order a private room, and do not mention my name. You understand?'"

But neither Mr. Pickwick nor Sam understood the wiles of Mr. Alfred Jingle and the lachrymose Job Trotter, consequently the former was led into that surprising adventure at the young ladies' school conducted by Miss Tomkins at Westgate House—a house the reader can identify for himself, if he be inclined to

do so, for "You turn a little to the right when you get to the end of the town; it stands by itself, some little distance off the high road, with the name on a brass plate on the gate." And he may also, if he be a great admirer of Mr. Pickwick, enter the Angel and look into the room in which that worthy gentleman pummelled the pillow and promised to inflict "personal chastisement" on Mr. Jingle, and in which, after recovering from the attack of rheumatism consequent on his midnight adventure in the grounds of Westgate House, he read to his friends Wardle and Trundle that affecting romance, "The Parish Clerk: a Tale of True Love." Indeed, Mr. Pickwick had good cause to remember his visit to the "good old Angel," as FitzGerald called it; for it was here that he received that staggering communication from Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, informing him of their impending action against him on behalf of Mrs. Bardell; and before he returned to town to give those designing attorneys the benefit of his opinion of them, his over-indulgence in a special kind of "Suffolk punch" resulted in his encountering the irate Captain Boldwig, and being incarcerated in a village pound. Dickens is said to have stayed at the Angel in his reporting days, and room No. II. is pointed out as that which he occupied.

Scarcely less interesting than Mr. Pickwick's adventures to the last generation of readers of romance were those of Valentine Vox the Ventriloquist and Sylvester Sound the Somnambulist, two eccentric characters conceived by Henry Cockton, a writer who resided in Bury for some years. Concerning Cockton himself, very little is known, save that he was born in London in 1807, and, subsequent to his marriage at St. James's Church,

Bury, sustained considerable pecuniary loss by entering into a malting speculation here, a business of which he was entirely ignorant. He died in 1853, and is buried in St. James's Churchyard—the monastic Cemetery of St. Edmund. No stone marks his grave; but on the south-west corner of the ruins of the Charnel Chapel founded by Abbot John de Northwold, there is a memorial inscription on a tablet erected in 1884 by a few of his admirers.

Adjoining the Angel Inn on the south side is an old house in which, in 1791, King Louis-Philippe, then a child, resided for a while, with his sister the Princess Adelaide d'Orleans, in the charge of no less a literary celebrity than Madame de Genlis. They came here from Bath, and, apparently, their lack of regard for what the Suffolk dames considered to be "the conventionalities" caused their conduct to be a good deal criticized. Among their acquaintances was the wife of the famous agriculturist, Arthur Young; and, according to Fanny Burney, Mrs. Young and her daughter "gave a very unpleasant account of Madame de Genlis, or Madame de Sillery, or Brulart, as she is now called. They say she has established herself at Bury, in their neighbourhood, with Mademoiselle la Princesse d'Orleans and Pamela" (Madame de Genlis' adopted child) "and a circe (Henrietta Sarcey), another young girl under her care. They have taken a house, the master of which always dines with them, though Mrs. Young says he is such a low man he should not dine with her daughter. They form twenty with themselves and household. They keep a botanist, a chemist, and a natural historian always with them. These are supposed to have been

common servants of the Duke of Orleans in former days, as they always walk behind the ladies abroad; but to make amends in the new equalizing style, they all dine together at home. They visit at no house but Sir Thomas Gage's, where they carry harps, and frequently have music. They have been to a Bury ball, and danced all night; Mademoiselle d'Orleans with anybody known or unknown to Madame Brulart." From Mr. Austin Dobson, however, we learn that even if, in the opinion of certain busy-bodies, Madame de Genlis and her charges associated too freely with the hospitable Bury folk, it was not because they were neglected, in their retirement, either by the leading families of the county or by famous men of the day. Mr. Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, and Mr. Hervey, afterwards Lord Bristol, were among their acquaintances, and they were visited by Windham, Fox, and Sheridan, "the latter having possibly some subordinate intention of flirting with Pamela, whom he undoubtedly admired, although, Mr. Moore infers, it is impossible that he offered to marry her, as Madame de Genlis would have us believe. Besides, it was only during her stay at Bury that he had lost Mrs. Sheridan, to whom he was greatly attached."

Unfortunately, we cannot be certain whether it was at the Angel Hill house or another, 87, Whiting Street, to which Madame de Genlis afterwards removed, that Sheridan worshipped at the feet of the fair Pamela; but the mention of his name reminds us that Elizabeth Inchbald, whom he declared to be the only authoress whose society pleased him, must often have walked these Bury streets, for she was born in the neighbouring parish of

Stanningfield, where her father, John Simpson, was a farmer, and whenever there were theatrical companies performing at the Bury Theatre, she was almost sure to be one of the audience. What was the consequence of all this playgoing—how she ran away from home in order to become an actress—will be remembered by every one who has read the story of Mrs. Inchbald's romantic career.

CHAPTER XVII

BARTON AND HAWSTEAD

Coleridge at Bury—Charles Lamb—His visit to Fornham—His coaching journey—Lamb's acrostics—Barton Hall—The Bunburys—Henry W. Bunbury—Oliver Goldsmith at Barton—Christmas at Barton—Goldsmith a general favourite—His mishaps—Hawstead—Joseph Hall—Hall and the atheist—Hall's marriage—His "Meditations"—"A good book"—"The owl"—The parsimony of Hall's patron—Hall leaves Hawstead.

THROUGH the medium of Henry Crabb Robinson, who was a connecting link between the little literary coterie at Bury already referred to and that London circle of poets, playwrights, and cranks to which Charles Lamb belonged, Lamb, in all probability, first learnt of the existence of such a place as Bury, and when Samuel Taylor Coleridge came here on a visit, the name of the place, like that of another Suffolk town, Bungay,[1] moved Lamb to communicate to a correspondent a rather feeble witticism.

"Coleridge," he wrote, "is not so bad as your fears have represented him: it is true he is Bury'd, although he is not dead; to understand this quibble you must know that he is at Bury St. Edmunds, relaxing after the fatigues of lecturing and Londonising."

Earlier than this, however, Lamb may have been reminded of Bury as the birthplace of Capel Lofft,

[1] See p. 229.

who, to his disgust, occasionally printed sonnets over the initials "C. L."

"That Manchester sonnet," he wrote to Coleridge, "I think very likely is Capel Lofft's. Another sonnet appeared with the same initials in the same paper, which turned out to be Procter's. What do the rascals mean? Am I to have the fathering of what idle rhymes every beggarly poetaster pours forth?"

Capel Lofft is best remembered as the friend and patron of Robert Bloomfield, the Suffolk peasant-poet, who was another of Lamb's pet aversions.

"You ask me about the 'Farmer's Boy,'" he wrote to Manning. "Don't you think the fellow who wrote it (who is a shoemaker) has a poor mind? Don't you find he is always silly about *poor Giles*, and those abject kind of phrases, which mark a man that looks up to wealth? None of Burns's poet dignity. What do you think? I have just opened him; but he makes me sick. Dyer knows the shoemaker, a damn'd stupid hound in company; but George promises to introduce him indiscriminately to all his friends."

Lord Byron, in a footnote to his lines on Bloomfield and other "tuneful cobblers," refers to Lofft as "the Mæcenas of shoemakers, and preface-writer-general to distressed versemen: a kind of gratis accoucher to those who wish to be delivered of rhyme, but do not know how to bring forth."

Early in the year 1830, Lamb himself saw the venerable town of Bury, as he passed through it on his way to and from the rectory at Fornham, where he went to see, and bring to his home at Enfield, his adopted daughter Emma Isola, who had been suffering

from illness. It was in the course of their journey from Fornham that Lamb had his famous encounter with the "rather talkative gentleman" who kept him in discourse for quite twenty miles of the journey.

For full twenty minutes they discussed the "probable advantages of steam carriages," which, wrote Lamb to Mrs. Williams, the wife of the rector of Fornham, "being merely problematical, I bore my part in with some credit, in spite of my totally unengineer-like faculties. But when somewhere about Stanstead he put an unfortunate question to me as to the probability of its turning out a good turnip season, and when I, who am still less of an agriculturist than a steam philosopher, not knowing a turnip from a potato ground, innocently made answer that I believed it depended very much upon boiled legs of mutton, my unlucky reply set Miss Isola a-laughing to a degree that disturbed her tranquillity for the only moment of our journey. I am afraid my credit sank very low with my other fellow-traveller, who had thought he had met with a well-informed passenger, which is an accident so desirable in a stage-coach. We were rather less communicative, but still friendly, the rest of the way."

A long coaching journey was so unusual an event in the life of Lamb, that it is not surprising to find more than one reference in his letters to that visit to Fornham. And it was characteristic of him to mention, when writing to Mrs. Hazlitt, an incident in connection with his arrival at the rectory which reminded him of his chief weakness. On entering the house he was met by Miss Isola.

"Poor Emma, the first moment we were alone, took me into a corner, and said, 'Now, pray don't drink; do

check yourself after dinner, for my sake, and when we get to Enfield, you shall drink as much as ever you please, and I won't say a word about it.' How I behaved, you may guess, when I tell you that Mrs. Williams and I have written acrostics on each other, and she hoped that she should have 'no reason to regret Miss Isola's recovery by its depriving *her* of our begun correspondence.'"

One of his acrostics on her name runs—

"Go, little poem, and present
Respectful terms of compliment;
A gentle lady bids thee speak!
Courteous is *she*, though thou be weak—
Evoke from Heaven as thick as manna.

"Joy after joy on Grace Joanna;
On Fornham's Glebe and Pasture land
A blessing pray. Long, long may stand,
Not touched by Time, the Rectory blithe;
No grudging churl dispute his Tithe;
At Easter be the offerings due

"With cheerful spirit paid; each pew
In decent order filled; no noise
Loud intervene to drown the voice,
Learning, or wisdom of the Teacher;
Impressive be the Sacred Preacher,
And strict his notes on holy page;
May young and old from age to age
Salute, and still point out, 'The good man's Parsonage.'"

Two other acrostics written by Lamb for Mrs. Williams and her family are included in his "Album Verses."

"I am afraid I shall sicken you of acrostics," he

wrote to her, "but this last was written *to order*. I beg you to have inserted in your country paper something like this advertisement: 'To the nobility, gentry, and others, about Bury. . . . C. Lamb respectfully informs his friends and the public in general, that he is leaving off business in the acrostic line, as he is going into an entirely new line. Rebuses and Charades done as usual, and upon the old terms. Also, Epitaphs to suit the memory of any person deceased.'"

The temptation to continue in Lamb's company is so great that, with the least excuse, I would go on quoting him, even to the extent of reprinting that delightful letter written to Crabb Robinson on hearing a report, "blown circuitously here from Bury," that Robinson was suffering from rheumatism—that letter in which he so playfully pretends that he himself is the sufferer, and not Robinson; but in wandering out of Bury to Fornham I am reminded that about two miles from the town in another direction—along the Ixworth Road—there is another house with which is associated the name of a poet who was not unlike Lamb in some respects, though he had not the gift of making himself so universally loved. This is Barton Hall, a fine old house originally built by Robert Audley, early in the seventeenth century, but much enlarged by the Bunburys, whose home it has been for several generations. Probably no house in the county has a finer collection of pictures than Barton, including, as it does, works by Rubens, Vandyck, Paul Veronese, Lely, Reynolds, and several other masters; and there is also a large collection of books, many of which were collected by Sir Thomas Hanmer, who spent his declining years at Mildenhall,

a few miles from Barton, living there, it is said, a life not unlike the home life of Sir Roger de Coverley. Not the least interesting of the treasures Barton can boast is an unequalled series of the works of Henry W. Bunbury, the famous caricaturist. He was a friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds, a fact accounting for there being so many fine pictures by that artist at Barton, including a full-length portraiture of Lady Sarah Lennox as Venus sacrificing to the Graces.

Barton is a house with an almost inexhaustible supply of interesting associations; but those with which we are immediately concerned attach to the lovable but erratic personality of Oliver Goldsmith, whose name became connected with Barton in this way. About the year 1769, Goldsmith became an intimate friend of the family of Captain Horneck, whom he first met at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who had known Mrs. Horneck in her native county of Devonshire. Subsequently, when a daughter of Captain Horneck became the wife of Henry Bunbury, the caricaturist, Goldsmith was frequently invited to Barton, where, as Prior says, "in agreeable society he found relief from the toils of study, and the occasional dissipations of a town life." To these invitations he often sent whimsical and humorous replies in rhyme, some of which are preserved in complete editions of his works. For instance, on being asked to spend the Christmas at Barton, he replied as follows:—

> "First let me suppose, what may shortly be true,
> The company set, and the word to be—loo;
> All smirking, and pleasant, and big with adventure,
> And ogling the stake which is fixed in the centre.



BARTON HALL

WHERE GOLDSMITH WAS THE GUEST OF THE BUNBURYS

Round and round go the cards, while I inwardly damn
At never once finding a visit from Pam.
I lay down my stake, apparently cool,
While the harpies about me all pocket the pool ;
I fret in my gizzard—yet cautious and sly,
I wish all my friends may be bolder than I :
Yet still they sit snug ; not a creature will aim,
By losing their money, to venture at fame.
'Tis in vain that at niggardly caution I scold,
'Tis in vain that I flatter the brave and the bold ;
All play their own way, and they think me an ass :
'What does Mrs. Bunbury?' 'I, sir? I pass.'
'Pray, what does Miss Horneck? Take courage, come do!'
'Who—I? Let me see, sir ; why, I must pass, too.'
Mr. Bunbury frets, and I fret like the Devil,
To see them so cowardly, lucky, and civil ;
Yet still I sit snug, and continue to sigh on,
Till made by my losses as bold as a lion,
I venture at all, while my avarice regards
The whole pool as my own. 'Come, give me five cards.'
'Well done!' cry the ladies ; 'Ah! Doctor, that's good—
The pool's very rich. Ah! the Doctor is loo'd.'
Thus foil'd in my courage, on all sides perplext,
I ask for advice from the lady that's next.
'Pray, ma'am, be so good as to give your advice ;
Don't you think the best way is to venture for't twice?'
'I advise,' cries the lady, 'to try it, I own—
Ah! the Doctor is loo'd : come, Doctor, put down.'
Thus playing and playing, I still grow more eager,
And so bold, and so bold, I'm at last a bold beggar.
Now, ladies, I ask—if law matters you're skill'd in,
Whether crimes such as yours should not come before Fielding?
For, giving advice that is not worth a straw,
May well be called picking of pockets in law ;
And picking of pockets, with which I now charge ye,
Is, by Quinto Elizabeth—death without clergy.
What justice! when both to the Old Bailey brought ;
By the gods! I'll enjoy it, though 'tis but in thought.
Both are placed at the bar with all proper decorum,
With bunches of fennel and nosegays before 'em ;

Both cover their faces with mobs and all that,
But the Judge bids them, angrily, take off their hat.
When uncovered, a buzz of inquiry runs round:
'Pray, what are their crimes?' 'They've been pilfering found.'
'But, pray, whom have they pilfered?' 'A Doctor, I hear.'
'What, that solemn-faced, odd-looking man that stands near?'
'The same.' 'What a pity! How does it surprise one:
Two handsomer culprits I never set eyes on!'
Then their friends all come round me, with cringing and leering,
To melt me to pity, and soften my swearing.
First, Sir Charles advances, with phrases well strung:
'Consider, dear Doctor, the girls are but young.'
'The younger the worse, I return him again;
'It shows that their habits are all dyed in grain.'
'But, then, they're so handsome; one's bosom it grieves.'
'What signifies handsome when people are thieves.'
'But where is your justice? their cases are hard.'
'What signifies justice? I want the reward.
'There's the parish of Edmonton offers forty pounds;
There's the parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, offers forty pounds;
There's the parish of Tyburn offers forty pounds:
I shall have all that, if I convict them!'
'But consider their case, it may yet be your own,
And see how they kneel: is your heart made of stone?'
This moves; so, at last, I agree to relent,
For ten pounds in hand, and ten pounds to be spent.

"I challenge you all to answer this. I tell you, you cannot; it cuts deep. But now for the rest of the letter; and next—but I want room—so I believe I shall battle the rest out at Barton some day next week. I don't value you all!

"O. G."

At Barton, where he generally enjoyed the company of "Little Comedy" (Mrs. Bunbury), and "The Jessamy Bride" (Mary Horneck), Goldsmith was a great favourite. Whenever life there was a bit dull, he would say, "Come now, and let us play the fool a little," and he was ready to take the lead in every mirth-provoking amusement. Nor did he object at all to being the victim of practical

jokes, even though they were carried to the extent of daubing paint on his best coat or damaging his only wig. He composed comic songs and sang them; romped with the children for hours together; at cards, was always an excited and noisy player; and so long as he stayed in the house every claimant for feminine favour found in him a roguish rival. On one occasion, a guest who was at Barton with him tells us, he had some difference of opinion with Lord Harrington respecting the depth of a pond in the grounds, and remarked that it was not so deep that if anything valuable was to be found at the bottom he would hesitate to pick it up. Upon this Lord Harrington threw a guinea into the pond, and the poet, in attempting to fulfil his promise without getting wet, fell into the water. He succeeded, however, in securing the guinea, and kept it, remarking "that he had abundant objects on whom to bestow any further proofs of his lordship's whim or bounty."

One of the pleasantest rambles out of Bury is that which takes the traveller to Hardwick House and on to Hawstead, where, until about sixty years ago, could be seen the old rectory-house which, from 1601 till 1608, was occupied by Dr. Joseph Hall, the satirist, who afterwards became Bishop of Exeter and Norwich. It was due to Lady Drury that Hall came to live in East Anglia; for just as he was on the point of accepting the mastership of a school at Tiverton, she offered him the Hawstead living. Sir Robert and Lady Drury were then living at Hawstead Place, a large quadrangular moated house of brick and timber, which stood on the site of the present Place Farm, where the

moat can still be seen; also the piers of a brick gateway erected in 1675 to commemorate the marriage of William Hanmer and Mrs. Peregrine North, the parents of Sir Thomas Hanmer. Near by are three fine Oriental plane trees, said to be the oldest in England, and to have been sent to Sir Robert Drury by Lord Bacon, who was related to him, but who is incorrectly credited with having introduced the tree into England. It is from the Drurys of Hawstead, who had a London house on the site of the Olympic Theatre, that Drury Lane derives its name.

Although invited to Hawstead by the lady of the manor, Hall did not enjoy here so peaceful a time as he had probably looked for when he left Cambridge to undertake the duties of a country benefice. This was chiefly owing to Sir Robert Drury having been strongly prepossessed against him by a Mr. Lilly, whom Hall calls "a witty and bold atheist," and who appears to have had his feelings ruffled by something Hall had written in his "Satires." He has been identified with that Lilly who wrote "Euphues; or, The Anatomy of Wit;" but however that may be, he was a near and uncongenial neighbour of the new rector of Hawstead, and caused him a good deal of trouble until, as Hall believed, Providence came to his aid.

"Finding the obduredness and hopeless condition of that man," he writes, "I bent my prayers against him; beseeching God daily, that he would be pleased to remove, by some means or other, that apparent hindrance of my faithful labours: Who gave me an answer accordingly; for this malicious man, going up hastily to London to exasperate my patron against

me, was then and there swept away by the pestilence, and never returned to do any further mischief."

The obnoxious Lilly having been permanently disposed of, Hall set to work to build a new parsonage house, in which he lived a lonely life until, in 1603, a brother rector, having compassion on him, took it upon himself to find him a wife. How the courtship began and ended, Hall tells us—

"The uncouth solitariness of my life, and the extreme incommodity of that single housekeeping, drew my thoughts, after two years, to condescend to the necessity of a married estate, which God no less strangely provided for me. For, walking from the church on Monday in the Whitsun week, with a grave and reverend minister, Mr. Grandidge, I saw a comely and modest gentlewoman standing at the door of that house where we were invited to a wedding dinner; and, inquiring of that worthy friend whether he knew her, 'Yes,' quoth he; 'I know her well, and have bespoken her for your wife.' When I further demanded an account of that answer, he told me she was the daughter of a gentleman whom he much respected, Mr. George Whinniff, of Bretenham, that, out of an opinion had of the fitness of that match for me, he had already treated with her father about it, whom he found very apt to entertain it; advising me not to neglect the opportunity, and not concealing the just praises of the modesty, piety, good disposition, and other virtues that were lodged in that seemly presence. I listened to the motion as sent from God, and at last, upon due prosecution, happily prevailed; enjoying the comfortable society of that meet help for the space of forty-nine years."

In 1606 Hall paid a visit to the Continent, in the company of Sir Edmund Bacon, the brother of Lady

Drury; but this seems to have been his only lengthy absence from Hawstead, his time being largely occupied with his literary work and various studies. Among other things, he wrote, while here, "The King's Prophecie or Weeping Joy," a poem on the death of Queen Elizabeth and the ascension of King James to the throne. Only two copies of this poem, one of which is in the British Museum, are known to be in existence. Subsequently he printed his "Centuries of Meditations and Vows," dedicated to Sir Robert and Lady Drury; and, as one of his biographers remarks, he went on writing book after book in order that he might buy books.

"A good book," says Hall, "is at once the best companion, and guide, and way, and end of our journey. Necessity drove our forefathers out of doors, which else, in those misty times, had seen no light: we may with more ease and no less profit sit still and inherit, and enjoy the labours of them and our elder brethren, who have purchased our knowledge with much hazard, time, toil, and experience, and have been liberal of their blood, some of them, to leave us rich." He has left us, too, his impressions "Upon the Sight of a Great Library:" "What a world of wit is here packed up together! I know not whether this sight doth more dismay or comfort me: it dismays me to think that here is so much I cannot know; it comforts me to think that this variety yields so good helps to know what I should. There is no truer word than that of Solomon—there is no end of making many books: this sight verifies it—there is no end; indeed, it were pity there should (be): God hath given to man a busy soul, the agitation whereof cannot but through time and experience work out many hidden truths; to suppress these, would be no other than injurious to mankind, whose minds, like unto so many candles, should

be kindled by each other: the thoughts of our deliberation are most accurate; these we vent into our papers: what a happiness is it that, without all offence of necromancy, I may here call up any of the ancient worthies of learning, whether human or divine, and confer with them of all my doubts! that I can at pleasure summon whole synods of reverend fathers, and acute doctors, from all the coasts of the earth, to give their well-studied judgments in all points of question which I propose! neither can I cast my eye casually upon any of these silent masters, but I must learn somewhat: it is a wantonness to complain of choice. No law bids us to read all: but the more we can take in and digest, the better-liking must the mind needs be."

Strolling in the dusk along the quiet byways, lanes, and field footpaths of Hawstead, Hall had ample opportunity for meditation, and he loved to ponder over some of the most familiar sights and incidents of a country life, and jot down for future use any trend of thought they might suggest. Even a glimpse of an owl flitting silently out of a wood set him thinking—

"What a strange melancholy life doth this creature lead; to hide her head all the day long in an ivy bush, and at night, when all other birds are at rest, to fly abroad, and vent her harsh notes. I know not why the ancients made *sacred* this bird to wisdom, except it be for her safe closeness and singular perspicuity; that when other domestical and airy creatures are blind, she only had inward light to discern the least objects for her own advantage. Surely thus much wit they have taught us in her: that he is the wisest man that would have least to do with the multitude; that no life is so safe as the obscure; that retiredness, if it have less comfort, yet has less danger and vexation; lastly, that he is truly wise who sees by a light of his own,

when the rest of the world sit in ignorant and confused darkness, unable to apprehend any truth save by the helps of an outward illumination."

It was the parsimony of Sir Robert Drury which drove Hall away from Hawstead, though it is more than likely that, even had his patron been generous, his growing fame would have created a demand for his services in a wider field than the "sweet and civil county of Suffolk."

"My means were but short at Hawstead," he says; "but such as I oft professed, if my then patron would have added but one ten pounds by year, which I held to be the value of my detained due, I should never have removed. One morning, as I lay in my bed, a strong motion was suddenly glanced into my thoughts of going to London. I arose, and betook me to the way. The ground that appeared of that purpose was to speak with my patron, Sir Robert Drury; if by occasion of the public preachership of St. Edmunds Bury, then offered me upon good conditions, I might draw him to a willing yieldance of that parcel of my due maintenance, which was kept back from my not over-deserving predecessor."

On reaching London, Hall was seized with illness at his patron's house in Drury Lane; but notwithstanding this he was persuaded by the tutor of the Earl of Essex to preach at Richmond before Henry, Prince of Wales, who was so pleased with the preacher and his discourse that he appointed him his domestic chaplain. Almost immediately afterwards Lord Denny offered him the benefice of Waltham, which he at once accepted. In spite of his patron's meanness to him,

they parted on good terms, and, in a farewell letter to Drury, Hall prays that—

"The God of the Harvest shall send you a labourer more able, as careful. That is my prayer, and hope, and shall be my joy. I dare not leave, but in this expectation, this assurance. Whatever become of me, it shall be my greatest comfort to hear you commend your change; and to see your happy progress in those ways I have both showed you and beaten. So shall we meet in the end, and never part."

The church at Hawstead, which has some Norman and Early English portions, contains several monuments to the Drurys; also the tomb and effigy of Eustace FitzEustace, who died in 1271. Much of the furniture, including the pulpit, is that with which the church was fitted at the time when Hall was rector.

CHAPTER XVIII

HONINGTON, EUSTON, AND ICKWORTH

Robert Bloomfield — Honington — Bloomfield's boyhood — A "farmer's boy"—A shoemaker—Capel Lofft—Bloomfield's poems —Euston Hall—Evelyn and Horace Walpole at Euston—Ickworth House—Frederic Hervey, Bishop of Derry, and the poet Gray—Lord John Hervey—Pope and Lord John Hervey—Lady Hervey.

DESPITE Charles Lamb's unfavourable opinion of Robert Bloomfield and his works, Suffolk folk still have a tenderness of heart towards the memory of their peasant-poet. They make no pretence of his having been a Burns, nor will they do Crabbe the injustice of comparing him with a poet who, although of little less humble birth, possessed talents of a much meaner order; but it is justly claimed for the Honington tailor's son that his homely notes gave true expression to the simple pastoral scenes from which he drew his inspiration, and pleasure to a wide circle of readers who were bewildered or dazzled by the brilliancy of his famous poetic contemporaries. Hazlitt, whose criticism of him is most friendly, asserts that "as a painter of simple natural scenery, and of the still life of the country, few writers have more undeniable and unassuming pretensions than" this "ingenious and self-taught poet," but he regrets that his muse has something "not only rustic, but menial in her aspect." Bloomfield,

however, sang the song of servitude—the labourer's servitude to the land which demands so much of him and gives him so little in return—and in giving expression to the woes, and pains, and humble aspirations of the farm-hand he struck only such notes as would find a responsive chord in the breasts of his fellow servitors. His outlook upon life was limited, and he had no imagination to help him to an understanding of what lay beyond the restricted bounds of his familiar woods and fields and meadows. Even love gave him no wider vision, nor set the footsteps of his muse a-tripping lightly. As a composer of rustic love-songs he is not to be compared with that other peasant-poet, John Clare. Bloomfield, even in his happiest moods, could never have written—

"I love thee, sweet Mary, but love thee in fear;
Were I but the morning breeze, healthy and airy,
As thou goest a-walking I'd breathe in thine ear,
And whisper and sigh how I love thee, my Mary!

"I would steal a kiss, but I dare not presume;
Were thou but a rose in thy garden, sweet fairy,
And I a bold bee for to rifle its bloom,
A whole summer's day would I kiss thee, my Mary!

"I long to be with thee, but cannot tell how;
Wert thou but the elder that grows on thy dairy,
And I the blest woodbine to twine on the bough,
I'd embrace thee and cling to thee ever, my Mary."

Bloomfield was a poet with no "fine frenzy" in him. He gave us no eagle-flights, nor did he look upon life from any aerial point of view where its marvels and mysteries were revealed to him. His flights were like those of the little brown birds which seldom rise far

above the field furrows; he sang at times of the soaring lark, but was himself the grey linnet keeping close to the earth; and like the linnet he was the better loved by quiet country folk for his humbler strains.

Bloomfield's native place is a small village about nine miles north-east of Bury, and not far from the border of that wild open heath country around Thetford which is known to-day as Breckland. Immediately around Honington, however, the country is fairly well wooded, and most of the scenes of which the poet has sung may be found within a mile or two of the dilapidated little clay-walled, thatch-roofed cottage behind the post-office, which is pointed out as the house in which Bloomfield was born. The cottage is one of a kind still common in some parts of the Eastern counties—a "wattle-and-daub" structure, such as were the homes of nearly all the country labouring folk a hundred years ago; but its occupant in 1766 was George Bloomfield, the village tailor, who died, however, before his youngest child Robert was a year old. He left a family of six young children, to maintain whom his widow kept a dame's school. Her own children were among her pupils, and we are told that she taught Robert to read as soon as he had learnt to speak; but she married again before he was more than seven years old, and, apart from two or three months' instruction in writing from a schoolmaster in the neighbouring parish of Ixworth, all the knowledge he ever became possessed of was entirely self-acquired. At the age of eleven he became a farmer's boy, his employer being his uncle, William Austin, of Sapiston, a village adjoining Honington. There he received no



COTTAGE AT HONINGTON

IN WHICH ROBERT BLOOMFIELD WAS BORN

different treatment than the other boys who worked on the farm; but as his uncle treated his farm boys just as he did his sons Robert probably had little to complain of. They all worked hard and all lived well. The land farmed by William Austin belonged to Robert's future patron, the Duke of Grafton, whose seat was Euston Hall, a magnificent house built by Lord Arlington in the reign of Charles II., and which was almost totally destroyed by fire about five years ago. Euston Park and woods provided the peasant-poet with many themes for his muse, and in his "Farmer's Boy" he describes the charms of the ducal domain and how his own days were spent on that part of it cultivated by his uncle.

"Where noble Grafton spreads his rich domains,
Round Euston's water'd vale, and sloping plains,
Where woods and groves in solemn grandeur rise,
Where the kite brooding unmolested flies;
The woodcock and the painted pheasant race,
And skulking foxes, destin'd for the chace;
There Giles, untaught and unrepining, stray'd
Through every copse, and grove, and winding glade;
There his first thoughts to Nature's charms inclin'd,
That stamps devotion on th' inquiring mind.
A little farm his generous Master till'd,
Who with peculiar grace his station fill'd;
By deeds of hospitality endear'd,
Serv'd from affection, for his worth rever'd;
A happy Offspring blest his plenteous board,
His fields were fruitful, and his barns well stor'd,
And fourscore Ewes he fed, a sturdy team,
And lowing Kine that grazed beside the stream;
Unceasing industry he kept in view;
And never lack'd a job for Giles to do."

But these lines were not written until some years after he had left the Sapiston farm. He was a small

and weakly boy, and it was soon evident to his master that he was not likely to be able to earn a living on the land; consequently his brother George, who was a shoemaker in London, offered to find employment for him in the same trade, and at the age of fifteen he was taken by his mother up to London. There he appears to have made his first essays in verse, some of which succeeded in winning a place in the "poet's corner" of the "London Magazine"; but it was not until he had married, at the age of four-and-twenty, the comely daughter of a Woolwich boat-builder, and had commenced house-keeping in a single room of a house in Bell Alley, Coleman Street, that he employed his mind, whilst working at his last, in composing "The Farmer's Boy." Like Thomson's "Seasons," this poem is divided into four parts, and it is said that he composed and committed to memory the latter part of its "Autumn" and the whole of its "Winter" without writing down a single line. It was offered to several publishers who declined to produce it, and finally was submitted to Capel Lofft, who was undoubtedly known to the poet as a man of literary tastes, residing at Troston near Bury. Under Lofft's patronage it was printed, and so favourable was its reception that within three years of its publication over twenty-six thousand copies were sold. An enthusiastic clergyman translated parts of it into Latin, and on hearing of this Bloomfield wrote—

"Hey, Giles! in what new garb art dressed?
For Lads like you methinks a bold one;
I'm glad to see thee so caress'd;
But, hark ye!—don't despise your old one.

Thou'rt not the first by many a Boy
Who've found abroad good friends to own 'em ;
Then, in such Coats have shown their joy,
E'en their own Fathers have not known 'em."

Not long after the appearance of "The Farmer's Boy" Bloomfield revisited Suffolk, and renewed his acquaintance with the scenes he had described. He was cordially welcomed by the many admirers his poem had gained him; and although admitted into such society as the farmer's boy at Sapiston can never have expected to enter, he had the good sense not to let himself be spoiled by flattery. He met for the first time his good friend Capel Lofft, who wrote :—

"I rejoice that I at length have been made personally acquainted with him: that I have seen him here (at Troston), and at his mother's, and at Bury: that I have discours'd with him: that we have made our rural walks together; that I have heard him read some of those poems which are not yet printed ; but which when they shall be so, will support fully and extend the Fame he has acquir'd. Though I have spent, occasionally, much of my life among persons worthy of Admiration and of Esteem, I can recollect few days so interesting and so valuable to me as these."

Among the poems soon to be presented to the public were some which had a direct appeal to the country folk of his native county, and which even now may sometimes be heard quoted in Suffolk farmhouses by old people who can remember the days when they were included among the most popular of country ballads. The best of them all, perhaps, is "Richard and Kate," which was so often recited during winter

evenings, when the farm-folk were gathered around the ancient open hearth; but in popularity it was run very close by "The Miller's Maid" and "The Horkey" the last-named being an entertaining account of the hearty feasting and rough and boisterous merriment with which the end of harvest was celebrated when farming was a more flourishing industry than it is to-day. In these simple ballads we have the peasant-poet at his best; but they were scarcely so well appreciated outside Suffolk as they were within it, because of the poet's free indulgence in vernacularism. The men and women for whom they were written knew every step of the farm-hand's *via dolorosa;* they met Richard and Giles every day; worked beside them in the field, the stackyard, the byre; shared their troubles, their hardships, their simple pleasures. The poet who sang to them of familiar things—of the home-life of the cottage, the cakes and ale of the farmer's kitchen, the fun of the country fair, the swinging of the flail, and the rolling of the churn—was one of themselves, and he was not without honour in his own country. He told them in rhyme the tales they had often heard by their own firesides, and his—

> "song, well meet for peasant lore,
> Was lowly, simple, undefil'd."

Euston Hall, the seat of that Duke of Grafton who did his best to help Bloomfield pecuniarily by securing for him a post in the Stamp Office, has been rebuilt since the disastrous fire in 1902, but enough of the original building remains to convey some idea of its character. It was visited in 1671 by Evelyn, who was

the guest there of Lord Arlington, and who describes it as "a very noble pile consisting of four pavilions after the French, beside a body of a large house." Its chief drawback was its situation, on "soil dry, barren, and miserably sandy, which flies in drifts as the wind sets;" but the planting of woods and fir belts—in the planning of which Evelyn's advice was sought by the Earl—tended to decrease the volume of these sand storms. A later visitor to Euston, Horace Walpole, was not so favourably impressed by it. Euston, he writes:—

"is one of the most admired seats in England, in my opinion, because Kent has made a most absolute disposition of it. Kent is now so fashionable that, like Addison's 'Liberty,' he—

'Can make bleak rocks and barren mountains smile.'

I believe the duke wishes he could make them green too. The house is large and bad: it was built by Lord Arlington, and stands, as all old houses do, for convenience of water and shelter, in a hole; so it neither sees nor is seen; he has no money to build another."

The park pleased Walpole more than did the house. He thought it "fine, the old woods excessively so: they are much grander than Mr. Kent's passion—clumps; that is, sticking a dozen trees here and there till a lawn looks like the ten of spades."

Evelyn was at Euston again in 1677, filled with admiration of the many wonderful improvements made by the Earl of Arlington since his previous visit. Especially was he impressed by a remarkable screw-bridge devised by Sir Samuel Morland, "which, being turned with a key, lands you thirty feet distant." He

makes a note of the fact that the earl had built a new church. This was "most laudable, most of the Houses of God in this country resembling rather stables and thatched cottages than temples in which to serve the Most High." While having his headquarters at Euston, he made excursions to Ipswich and Thetford, also to Bury, where he attended the death-bed of Lord Crofts —the "mad-cap Croftes" of Grammont's "Memoirs"— whose home was at Little Saxham. Of the Hall, where Lord Crofts was visited at least four times by Charles II., Pepys the diarist being also a guest there on one of those occasions, nothing now remains save the foundations and moat in the middle of a field.

Notwithstanding that neglect, together with the impoverishment of some once-notable families, has resulted in the decay of several fine old houses, the neighbourhood of Bury is still somewhat remarkable for its old halls and historic seats, and the interesting associations of these are so numerous and varied that the reference which has been made to some of them necessitates the neglect of others with equal claims to recognition. In closing this chapter, however, brief mention must be made of Ickworth House, built by that Frederic Hervey, Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry, who was a college friend of the poet Gray, with whom, as the latter records, he ate "four raspberry puffs" one day in the pastry-cook's shop at the corner of Cranbourne Street. Ickworth Building, as it is locally called, is a comparatively modern house, dating only from the latter part of the eighteenth century. Before it was built there were Herveys at Ickworth, and among them was that John, Lord Hervey, whose

"Memoirs" give us interesting and valuable glimpses into court life during the first ten years of the reign of George II., but whose name is most frequently mentioned nowadays in connection with that of Pope, with whom he had a long and bitter quarrel. Exactly "what 'twas all about" it is difficult now to decide; but in their exchange of literary discourtesies Lord Hervey undoubtedly came off second best. Pope attacked him severely in several of his writings, calling him "Lord Fanny" on account of his peculiar manners, and elsewhere "Narcissus" who—

> "praised with all a parson's power,
> Looked a white lily sunk beneath a shower."

The poet is also credited with being the originator of the saying, "that this world consists of men, women, and Herveys;" but it is quite as likely that this saying has been correctly attributed to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. John, Lord Hervey was the husband of that Lady Mary (Lepell) Hervey who was a famous court beauty of her day, and whose praises were sung by Pope and Gay, Pulteney and Chesterfield, while Voltaire, another of her admirers, addressed to her some verses in English commencing—

> "Hervey, would you know the passion
> You have kindled in my breast."

Some of her brightly written letters are to be found in the published correspondence of Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk, while others, sent to the Rev. Edmund Morris, her sons' tutor, were issued in 1821. Most of them were written from Ickworth, and they prove Lady Mary to have become something more than "the

beautiful Molly Lepell" whose life at Court, while she attended Caroline of Anspach, must perforce have been one of extravagant gaiety. She took a keen interest in home and foreign politics, had a good taste in, and was a shrewd critic of, literature, and could never read a good book without being anxious that her friends should share her enjoyment of it. Birds and flowers were also a constant delight to her.

"For the last three weeks," she writes, "I have been stuck as deeply in my garden as any of the plants I have set there, and I wish they may flourish half as well; for though I can't say I have run up in height, yet I have spread most luxuriantly." As for the birds, "I have drawn a prodigious concourse of all kinds to the garden, and to my window in particular, by plenty of seeds, crumbs of bread, oatmeal, and all that can please their taste and solicit their abode. I have planted them a retreat in bad weather. They repay me by the most delightful music. . . . I will enjoy this sweet place, and quiet way of living as long as Lord Bristol lives, and am preparing a dwelling that will suit better with my purse, though not so well with my inclination. I have paid dear to make that dwelling *look* as like the country as I can; but I have been too much used to grass and trees to bear changing them for bricks and dust."

Lady Hervey died in September, 1768. Horace Walpole, who had addressed to her some of the best of his letters, wrote to Sir Horace Mann soon after her death:—

"Lady Hervey, one of my great friends, died in my absence. She is a great loss to several persons; her house was one of the most agreeable in London;

and her own friendliness, good breeding, and amiable temper, had attached all that knew her. Her sufferings . . . were terrible, and yet never could affect her patience, or divert her attention to her friends."

She is buried in Ickworth Church, where her grave bears some memorial lines written by Walpole.

CHAPTER XIX

KING'S LYNN AND NORTH NORFOLK

A Dutch-like town—Its old merchants—Monastic times—Notable monks of Lynn—John Capgrave—Was Chaucer a native of Lynn?—Roger L'Strange—Horace Walpole—Houghton Hall—Dr. Burney—Fanny Burney—Eugene Aram—The story of his life.

THAT part of Norfolk of which the ancient port of King's Lynn is the chief town, is more attractive by reason of its variety of scenery than any other part of East Anglia; for it includes, not only a considerable portion of the wide-spreading Fenland, but also the delightful hilly and heathy country amid which the King has his Norfolk home, the northern part of the great chalk ridge which crosses West Norfolk, that picturesque valley of the Nar which Canon Jessopp has called the Norfolk Holy Land, the salt marsh levels and wild-fowl haunted border-lands of the Wash, and some of the prettiest seashore and inland villages on and near the East Coast. The history of the district, too, is full of interest and romance, attaching chiefly to Lynn when it was besieged by the Parliament troops and was one of the most flourishing ports in the kingdom; Castle Rising, when it was the home of that tragic queen, Isabella, wife of the murdered King Edward II.; Houghton Hall, when it was the scene of the almost

regal hospitality of its builder, Sir Robert Walpole; Anmer, at the time when it was the hiding-place of Henry Walpole the Jesuit; and the old Fen villages in the days of the great Fen floods. The stories of these times and places are oft-told tales, and the main facts of them—or something like them—are set down in nearly every local guide-book; while the scenery of North Norfolk, of its primitive heathland, sluggish streams, varied coast-line, and somnolent fens, has been described time after time, and especially since the King (then Prince of Wales), by purchasing Sandringham, became a Norfolk squire. So to find a fresh interest in a district so well known is no easy matter; and in gathering together some of its literary associations one must of necessity travel several country highways and byways, and not expect to find all one seeks in and around its only important town. For Lynn, since monastic times, has never been famous as a seat of learning, nor, in spite of its somewhat adventurous associations, has it ever received the attention it deserves at the hands of writers of stirring romance. Some day the old town, which has numbered among its burgesses so many merchant-adventurers, and which gave to the world so famous a navigator as Vancouver, may excite the interest of a writer capable of telling its stirring story as it should be told.

In many respects King's Lynn reminds one of an old Dutch town; for to a large extent it has been won from the sea, and almost everywhere about it there are traces of that adventurous enterprise which had its origin in the buccaneering exploits of the daring seamen of Elizabeth's reign. Some of the houses of the old

merchants of Lynn are still standing in the streets near the river, and their fine doorways and the oak panelling of the rooms are significant of successful ventures into foreign lands; labyrinths of crypt-like vaults beneath them, and tunnelling nearly the whole of King's Staithe Square, remind one that for many years Lynn was the principal wine-importing port of the kingdom; while the sight of an ancient inn with such a name as the Greenland Fishery suggests a time when the Lynn whale-fishery was flourishing, and the streets were at times boisterous with the merry-making of sturdy mariners, home from the northern seas. The old Halls of the merchants' guilds, the paintings of old ships over the fireplaces of the old houses down by the river, together with some of the ancient records so ably edited for the Historical Manuscripts Commission by the late Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson, and the statements of old writers and diarists who knew Lynn in its palmiest days, one and all tend to prove that for centuries the old town had little concern save for matters connected with its shipping trade, that its heroes were its successful merchants, its measure of a man's worth the fulness of his cellars and the length of his purse. In a community with interests so centred, with such standards, and with ambitions so practical, there could hardly be much room for the development of native literary talent; consequently, its men of letters, with very few exceptions, have been strangers whom force of circumstance brought for a time into the midst of its mercantile trafficking. Among its merchant princes there was probably none who could have appreciated the feelings of that worthy Lynn doctor, Sir William Browne, whom Foote caricatured



KING'S LYNN

in his farce "The Devil on Two Sticks," and who, before he died and was buried at Hillington, near Lynn, directed that his Elzevir "Horace" should be buried with him.

In monastic times, however, the conditions of life in the town were different, and in the cloistral calm of its several monasteries men thought of other things than money-making and cultivated learning for its own sake. There Alan of Lynn laboriously compiled his numerous indices and Galfridus "Grammaticus," his English and Latin dictionary; William Gale distinguished himself by his learning and piety, and, most notable of all, John Capgrave, Provincial of the English Austin Friars, wrote his "Lives of the Saints" and several other works which made him deservedly famous. Capgrave was evidently a Lynn man by birth; for in the Prologue of his "Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria," he says—

> "If you will know what that I am:
> My country is Norfolk, of the town of Lynn;
> Out of the world to my profit I came
> Into the brotherhood which I am in—
> God give me grace never for to blynne (cease)
> To follow the steps of my fathers before
> Which to the rule of Austin were swore."

Like John Lydgate of Bury, he was a contemporary of Chaucer, though he was but a child when the great poet died; and this reminds one that it has been claimed for Lynn that it was the birthplace of Chaucer. Mr. Walter Rye has pointed out that in a manuscript history of Lynn, called "Lennæ Rediviva," said to have been written by Ben Adam for Edward IV., it is positively

stated that the poet was born in Lynn; for under the heading of "Friars" the author writes—

> "Lynn had the honour to present the world
> With Geoffrey Chaucer, Capgrave, and the curled
> Pate Albanus de Lenna, &c."

In the opinion of Mr. Rye there are several things suggestive of Chaucer being a Norfolk man, such as his reference to the obscure Norfolk village "clepen Baldeswelle," to Friar Nicholas of Lynn, and to the Holy Cross of Bromholme, to say nothing of possible family connections; but the generally accepted belief is that Chaucer was born in London.

In 1644, the year after the siege and capitulation of Lynn to the Parliament troops, there was a small conspiracy among the local Royalists to regain possession of the town for the king. The leading conspirator was Roger L'Estrange of Hunstanton, who, while plotting and planning, had his headquarters at Appleton Hall, a house which stood on the site now occupied by the Norfolk home of the King of Norway. L'Estrange was betrayed by one of his confederates, and, after a trial by martial law, was condemned to death; but after lying three years in prison he escaped to the Continent, where he stayed until the Restoration. While in prison he is said to have written some verses entitled "The Liberty of Imprisoned Royalists," two of which are as follows—

> "That which the world miscalls a gaol,
> A private closet is to me,
> Whilst a good conscience is my bail,
> And innocence my liberty.
> Locks, bars, walls, leanness, though together met,
> Make me no prisoner, but an anchoret.
>
> * * * * *

"I am the bird whom they combine
Thus to deprive of liberty;
But though they do my corps confine,
Yet, maugre hate, my soul is free;
And though I'm mewed, yet I can chirp and sing,
Disgrace to rebels, glory to my king!"

But it was neither his plotting nor his verse-writing won for Roger L'Estrange the honour of being accorded something like ten pages in the "Dictionary of National Biography." He was an industrious pamphleteer and political controversialist of the most outspoken order, though withal a somewhat scurrilous writer, who rarely knew when he had passed the bounds of good taste; and by starting in 1663 a weekly sheet called "The Intelligencer," "published for the satisfaction and information of the people," he has caused himself to be remembered as the founder of the first newspaper, and that a half-penny one! A copy of the first issue, which was published on a Monday, is preserved in the Public Record Office. Pepys, who speaks of L'Estrange as "a man of fine conversation, I think, but I am sure most courtly and full of compliments," bought "The Intelligencer" on the day of its first issue, and thought its editor had made "but a simple beginning." On the following Thursday, L'Estrange published another single sheet called "The News," and he continued to issue the one on Mondays and the other on Thursdays until the early part of 1666, trying, Pepys tells us, "to get now and then some news of me." Later on, from one cause and another, he became unpopular with the public, and in November, 1680, was burnt in effigy by a London mob. In a tract issued in October of that year he is

depicted as a dog holding a violin and bow (a hit at his talent for music), and in an appended note, written in imitation of a "Hue and Cry," it is said of him: "He has a thousand tricks, viz., to fetch for the Papists, carry for the Protestants, whine to the King, dance to Noll's fiddle, fawn on the courtier, wag his tail at all bitches, hunt counter to the plot, tonguepad the evidence, and cring to the crucifix, but, above all, he has a damn'd old trick of slipping the halter." He was popularly known as "the Dog Towzer," and among other lampoons directed against him was what purported to be the first number of a periodical called "News from the Land of Chivalry, containing a pleasant and delectable history, and the wonderful and strange adventures of Don Rogero de Strangemento, Kt. of the Squeaking Fiddlestick." He won, however, the favour of King James II., by whom, in April, 1685, he was knighted. In addition to his political pamphlets, he was the compiler of "The Fables of Æsop and other Eminent Mythologists," which has since been described as the most extensive collection of fables in existence; he was also the author of some amusing satires. Macaulay describes his style as being "a mean and flippant jargon," while Hallam regarded him as "the pattern of bad writing;" but he was undoubtedly one of the most popular writers of his day, and not without claims to be considered a scholar. He lived to a good old age, being born at Hunstanton Hall in 1616 and dying in 1704. He was buried in London, in the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields.

Horace Walpole's connection with Lynn was that of its representative in Parliament, to which he was elected, as member for the town, in 1761. The festivities by

which his return was celebrated were not at all to his taste; and a few days after the election he wrote to his friend George Montagu—

"Think of me, the subject of a mob, who was scarce ever before in a mob, addressing them in the town hall, riding at the head of two thousand people through such a town as Lynn, dining with above two hundred of them, amid bumpers, huzzas, songs, and tobacco, and finishing with country dancing at a ball, and sixpenny whist! I have borne it all cheerfully; nay, have sat hours in *conversation*, the thing upon earth that I hate; have been to hear misses play on the harpsichord, and to see an alderman's copies of Rubens and Carlo Marat. Yet to do the folks justice, they are sensible and reasonable and civilized; their language is polished since I lived among them. I attribute this to their more frequent intercourse with the world and the capital, by the help of good roads and postchaises, which, if they have abridged the King's dominions, have at least tamed his subjects."

But Lynn probably saw very little of Horace Walpole, who was far from being attracted by the "wilds of Norfolk," as he called them, and who could never even feel at home in his father's magnificent house at Houghton—a massive and stately house a few miles from the town. There, as a young man, he resented having to meet the bucolic squires—"mountains of roast beef . . . roughly hewn out into the outlines of human form"—whom Sir Robert invited to be his guests; and in after years he could never bear to stay in the house for more than a day or two at a time, owing to the melancholy reflections it suggested to him. These he embodied in one of his most frequently quoted letters.

"Here I am at Houghton! and alone! in this spot where (except two hours last month) I have not been for sixteen years. Think, what a crowd of reflections! No; Gray, and forty churchyards, could not furnish so many; nay, I know one must feel them with greater indifference than I possess, to have patience to put them into verse. Here I am, probably for the last time of my life; every clock that strikes tells me I am an hour nearer yonder church—that church, into which I have not yet had courage to enter, where lies the mother on whom I doated, and who doated on me. There are two rival mistresses of Houghton, neither of whom ever wished to enjoy it—there too lies he who founded its greatness, to contribute to whose fall all Europe was embroiled. There he sleeps in quiet dignity, while his friend and his foe, rather his false ally and his real enemy, are exhausting the dregs of their pitiful lives in squabbles and pamphlets.

"The surprise the pictures gave me is again renewed: accustomed for many years to see nothing but wretched daubs and varnished copies at auctions, I look at these as enchantment. My own description of them seems poor; but shall I tell you truly, the majesty of Italian ideas sinks before the warm *nature* of Flemish colouring. Alas! don't I grow old? My young imagination was fired with Guido's ideas! Does great youth feel with poetic limbs, as well as see with poetic eyes? In one respect I am very young. I cannot satiate myself with looking: an incident contributed to make me feel this more strongly. A party arrived, just as I did, to see the house, a man and three women in riding dresses, and they rode post through the apartments. I could not hurry before them fast enough; they were not so long in seeing, for the first time, as I could have been in one room to examine what I knew by heart. I remember formerly being diverted with these *see-ers;* they come, ask what such a room is called in which Sir Robert lay, write it down, admire a lobster or a cabbage

in a market-piece, dispute whether the last room was green or purple, and then hurry to the inn for fear the fish should be over-dressed. How different my sensations! Not a picture here but recalls a history; not one but I remember in Downing-street or Chelsea, where queens and crowds admired them, though seeing them as little as those travellers!

"When I had drunk tea, I strolled into the garden: they told me it was now called 'the pleasure ground.' What a dissonant idea of pleasure! Those groves, those alleys, where I have passed so many charming moments, are now stripped up or overgrown: many fond paths I could not unravel, though with a very exact clue in my memory. I met two gamekeepers and a thousand hares! In the days when all my soul was tuned to pleasure and vivacity (and you will think, perhaps, it is far from being out of tune yet), I hated Houghton and its solitude. Yet I loved this garden—as now, with many regrets, I love Houghton—Houghton, I know not what to call it, a monument of grandeur or ruin. How I wished this evening for Lord Bute: how I could preach to him! For myself, I don't want to be preached to. The servants wanted to lay me in the great apartment.—What! to make me pass my night as I had done my evening! It was like proposing to Margaret Roper to be a duchess in the court that cut off her father's head, and imagining that would please her. I have chosen to sit in my father's little dressing-room; and am now by his escritoire, where, in the height of his fortune, he used to receive the accounts of his farmers, and deceive himself, or us, with the thoughts of his economy. How wise a man at once, and how weak! For what has he built Houghton? For his grandson to annihilate, or for his son to mourn over."

In that quiet country church in Houghton Park—that church into which he had not the courage to enter—Horace Walpole, the fantastic and fastidious *dilettante*,

the hater of quiet country life, lies buried with his father, the great prime minister. To neither the famous letter-writer nor the great statesman is there any monument raised; but above the vault in which they lie, with other Walpoles, famous and obscure, there is placed a fine effigy of a nameless prior, brought from the priory church of Cokesford nearly four hundred years ago.

A few months before Horace Walpole was elected to Parliament as member for Lynn, there departed from the town Dr. Charles Burney, the author of the "History of Music," who had filled the post of organist of St. Margaret's Church. With him he took a little daughter who had been born during his residence in the town, and who, as Fanny Burney, author of "Evelina," was to meet with remarkable success as a novelist before she attained her twenty-sixth year. She was born in June, 1752; but no record has been preserved which might help us to identify the house in which her father was living at the time; afterwards the family appear to have lived in a house which faced the west door of St. Margaret's Church (where its site is now occupied by a modern one) or in a neighbouring house now known as Dr. Chadwick's. She is said to have been a remarkably shy and backward child; at eight years old she did not know her letters, and her elder brother used to amuse himself by pretending to teach her to read from a book held upside down—a trick which, he declared, she never found out. She was called "the little dunce" save by her mother, who was a woman of considerable insight and ability and may have perceived that behind the child's diffidence and apparent stupidity lay a reflective mind and a wisdom beyond her years. Fanny was only

eight when her father removed to London; but in 1768 —a year after Dr. Burney's second marriage, to Mrs. Allen, the widow of a Lynn merchant—she returned for a while to Lynn and wrote here some of the earliest notes of her "Early Diary" in "the pleasantest place" belonging to the old house near the churchyard. "It is called 'the Look out'—as ships are observed from hence." Adjoining the house was a small but prettily laid out garden, where, on mild summer evenings, she walked to and fro, meditating on the books she was reading, especially those dealing with matters of religion. She scarcely ever walked in this garden, she says, "without becoming grave, for it has the most private, lonely, shady, melancholy look in the world." At the age of sixteen she was convinced that a country town was "her detestation." In a city or a village one could be comfortable; but a country town had "all the bad qualities, without one of the good ones, of both." Her visitors did not at all please her. "Such a set of tattle tattle, prittle prattle visitants! Oh dear! I am so sick of the ceremony and fuss of these fall lall people!" In the following year, when she was again in Lynn, she makes a similar complaint about "This perpetual round of constrained civilities," pronouncing it "a most unworthy way of spending our precious and irrecoverable time."

Fanny Burney at Lynn, however, is little more than a shadow, and she comes into these pages only to pass out of them again. For the majority of visitors to Lynn, as well as for the greater number of the townsfolk, the literary associations of the town begin and end with Eugene Aram. Although nearly a century and

a half have elapsed since Aram was executed at York for the murder of Daniel Clark at Knaresborough, a somewhat morbid interest, chiefly inspired by Bulwer's romance, Thomas Hood's familiar verses, and Sir Henry Irving's genius for tragedy, still attaches to the old schoolhouse in St. James's Street, where, until a year ago, the Grammar School was conducted of which Aram was an undermaster at the time of his arrest. That old schoolhouse, however, has no actual association with the murderer; for when Aram was connected with the school, it was conducted in an old Charnel Chapel, which stood on the site now occupied by the shambles and reading-rooms. To-day, it is rather hard to understand why so sordid and commonplace a crime as the murder of Clark by a man like Aram should have caused so great a sensation all over the country, for the crime is almost without a touch of romance; but the fact of the murderer having been able to live among his fellows unsuspected for nearly fourteen years after it was committed, and display during that time no sign of remorse or fear of a just retribution, undeniably made a great impression on the public mind, notwithstanding that similar cases were already recorded in the annals of crime. Since then many a more sensational murder has been committed and forgotten; but the name of Aram still suggests to most people a unique and mysterious personality, in spite of the brutality of his crime and the sordidness of its motive.

The story of his career can be briefly told. Born at Ramsgill in Netherdale in 1704, Aram, whose father was a gardener, obtained, after a few years schooling, employment as a clerk in London; but was soon

obliged to return home on account of ill-health. He then opened a small school in his native place and afterwards married. In 1734 he removed to Knaresborough, where he continued to teach, occupying much of his spare time in studying Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He remained in Knaresborough about ten years, and then left the town suddenly under suspicion of being concerned in some fraudulent practices with Daniel Clark, who at the same time disappeared. Little definite is known of his life during the next twelve or thirteen years ; but he seems to have roamed about the country, sometimes obtaining engagements at schools, but not confining himself to scholastic work, though he maintained his interest in the study of languages, and became fairly proficient in French, Arabic and Celtic. Early in 1758 he appears to have applied for the position of undermaster of the Lynn Grammar School ; for in the Corporation Hall Books, under date of the 14th February of that year, there is the following entry :

"Mr. Knox having informed this House by letter that he had dismissed John Birkes, his late usher, and had engaged Eugenius Aram in his stead, subject to their approbation, the said Eugenius Aram is approved of by this House during the pleasure and under the control and power entirely of the said Mr. Knox, and it is ordered that the usher's salary be paid to Mr. Knox during the pleasure of this House."

Soon after his arrival at Lynn, Aram made the acquaintance of the Rev. Thomas Weatherhead, who was vicar of Heacham, a coast parish a few miles from the town, and when the school broke up for its summer holiday he accepted an invitation to stay for a while at

Heacham Vicarage. While working in the garden there, he was recognised by a Yorkshire horse-dealer, who called at the house and told the vicar that he knew his friend and that his name was Aram. The horse-dealer subsequently went to Knaresborough, where he mentioned having seen Aram; but nothing came of this until the following August, when the discovery of some human bones in the neighbourhood of Knaresborough reminded the townsfolk of Clark's disappearance, and it was suggested that the bones were his and that he had been murdered. An inquest was held, at which a man named Houseman, who had been Aram's accomplice, stated, on seeing the bones: "These are no more Daniel Clark's bones than they are mine;" an expression of opinion which caused him to be arrested on suspicion of having been concerned in the murder. He was taken to York, and there accused Aram of the crime, adding that the body of the murdered man would be found buried in St. Robert's Cave, near Knaresborough, where, upon search being made, his skeleton was discovered. A warrant was then issued for Aram's arrest, and about seven months after his arrival in Lynn two constables from Knaresborough were despatched here to take him into custody. These two men, Barker and Moor by name, first interviewed Sir John Turner, a local magistrate, who accompanied them to the old Grammar School, where the arrest took place. Hood's version of what followed, which is that—

> "Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn,
> Through the cold and heavy mist,
> And Eugene Aram walked between,
> With gyves upon his wrist,"

is hardly correct; for we are told that the constables conveyed their prisoner to Knaresborough in a post-chaise.

In a preface to the 1840 edition of his novel, Bulwer writes.

"The strange history of Eugene Aram had excited my interest and wonder long before the present work was composed or conceived. It so happened, that during Aram's residence at Lynn, his reputation for learning had attracted the notice of my grandfather—a country gentleman living in the same county, and of more intelligence and accomplishments than, at that day, usually characterised his class. Aram frequently visited at Heydon (my grandfather's house), and gave lessons, probably in no very elevated branches of erudition, to the younger members of the family. This I chanced to hear when I was on a visit to Norfolk, some two years before this novel was published, and it tended to increase the interest with which I had previously speculated on the phenomena of a trial which, take it altogether, is perhaps the most remarkable in the register of English crime. I endeavoured to collect such anecdotes of Aram's life and manners as tradition and hearsay still kept afloat. These anecdotes were so far uniform that they all concurred in representing him as a person who, till the detection of the crime for which he was sentenced, had appeared of the mildest character and the most unexceptionable morals. An invariable gentleness and patience in his mode of tuition—qualities then very uncommon at schools—had made him so beloved by his pupils at Lynn, that, in after life, there was scarcely one of them who did not persist in the belief in his innocence. His personal and moral peculiarities, as described in these pages, are such as were related to me by persons who had heard him described by his contemporaries: the calm benign countenance—the delicate health—the thoughtful stoop

—the noiseless step—the custom, not uncommon with scholars and absent men, of muttering to himself—a singular eloquence in conversation, when once roused from silence—an active tenderness and charity to the poor, with whom he was always ready to share his own scanty means—an apparent disregard of money, except when employed in the purchase of books—an utter indifference to the ambition usually accompanying self-taught talent, whether to better the condition or increase the repute;—these, and other traits of the character portrayed in the novel, are, so far as I can rely on my information, faithful to the features of the original."

The novelist himself was convinced of Aram's guilt, so far as his being an accomplice of Houseman in the commission of the crime was concerned; but he believed him to have been "free from the premeditated design and the actual deed of murder." To later editions of his novel he appended an authentic specimen of Aram's literary work, consisting of an essay entitled "The Mel-supper and Shouting the Churn," which was an account of the origin of certain rural entertainments and customs formerly generally associated with the English harvest. This and other papers he had written during his leisure hours, together with a remarkable "Outline of a New Lexicon," which has since earned for him the title of the "true father of comparative philology." Had he been born to fortune, or even to a comfortable competency, he would probably have distinguished himself by his learning, and especially by his linguistic knowledge; instead of this, he was often in dire poverty, and it was undoubtedly poverty that drove him to crime and brought him to the gallows. Perhaps the justest

estimate of his character and ability is that of Dr. Richard Garnett, who says:

"Aram was undoubtedly convicted on the testimony of a greater criminal than himself, and his talents and misfortunes excite so much interest that it would be satisfactory to be able to concur with Bulwer's view that he was merely guilty of robbery. Unhappily all external evidence tends to fix upon him the charge of participation in deliberate fraud and murder, and there is little in his general conduct to rebut it. His indulgence to children and his kindness to animals are indeed amiable traits attested on good authority, but such as have frequently been found compatible with great moral obliquity. As a self-taught scholar he has had many equals; but his peculiar distinction is to have lighted upon a truth of the greatest moment, unrecognised in his day by any scholar—the affinity of the Celtic to the other European languages. He had indeed been anticipated by Edward Lhuyd, and to a less extent by Davies and Sheringham, but their observations had passed unregarded. Aram's fragment on the subject, though marred by fanciful analogies between Celtic and Hebrew, proves that he had thoroughly grasped it. He had a clear perception of the importance of local names in etymology, and he was perhaps the only man in his age who disputed the direct derivation of Latin from Greek. It is hardly too much to say that had he enjoyed wealth and leisure he might have advanced the study of comparative philology by fifty years."

CHAPTER XX

KING'S LYNN AND NORTH NORFOLK—*continued.*

Sir Walter Besant—"The Lady of Lynn"—Lynn's "Red Register"—Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers—Middleton Towers—Caxton's epilogue to "The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers"—Langham—Captain Marryat—Norfolk's Elizabethan admirals—Langham Manor—Marryat as a farmer—His treatment of the coastguard's officer—Death of Marryat—His grave.

SAVE for a brief mention in the preface, nothing is said in Bulwer's novel about Aram's connection with Lynn—an omission by which the townsfolk sometimes feel aggrieved; but a later novelist, who dealt with life in Lynn in its prosperous days, and when it was for a brief while a popular spa, made some amends for this by making his hero describe the town in flattering terms. This was the late Sir Walter Besant, who, in his "Lady of Lynn," has a fair Lynn maiden, Molly Miller, for his heroine—a fact which may have caused Jack Pentecrosse to see the town through rose-tinted glasses.

"I have sailed over many seas," he says; "I have put in at many ports; I have taken in cargoes of many countries—the way of sailors I have found the same everywhere. And as for the food and drink, and the buildings, I say that Lynn is behind none. Certainly the Port of London, whether at Wapping, or Limehouse, or Shadwell, cannot show anything so fine as the Market

Place of Lynn, or St. Margaret's Church, or our Custom House. Nor have I found anywhere people more civil of speech, and more obliging and well-disposed,[1] than in my own town, where, apart from the sailors and their quarters, the merchants and shipowners are substantial; trade is always brisk; sometimes week after week one ship arrives and a ship puts out; the yards are always busy; the hammer and the anvil resound all day long; carpenters, rope-makers, boat-builders, block-makers, sail-makers, all the people wanted to fit out a ship . . . are at work without intermission all the year round, from five in the morning till eight in the evening. They stand at good wages; they live well; they dress warm; they drink of the best. It is a city of great plenty."

And Jack goes on to sing the praises of his native port, of the Spanish and Portuguese wines, and the Bordeaux claret which filled its cellars, its trade with Norway and far remoter lands, of the sheep, and hogs, and geese, and wild-fowl of the Fens, and the wonderful fertility of the reclaimed lands. Nor could he—for his father was Master of the Grammar School and an antiquary, though he himself was but a simple sailor—fail to be impressed by the "ancient buildings, walls, towers, arches, churches, gateways," of the town, "fragments which proclaim its antiquity and speak of its former importance." But even the simple sailor could not help admitting that Lynn was a place which

[1] It is a pleasure to me to quote Jack Pentecrosse's testimony to the civility and good nature of the inhabitants of Lynn, more especially as the reputation of the townsfolk, as they were in the earlier half of the eighteenth century, may be suffering somewhat in consequence of the lately published opinion of Dr. Pyle ("Memoirs of a Royal Chaplain") that "The people of Lynn are very fine people—as a man would wish to stick a knife into!"

concerned itself very little about literature, and where there was slight encouragement for the development of literary taste. When he talked with Molly Miller in the summer-house in Captain Crowle's garden, they spoke of everything save love and books.

"There was no talk about books, because there were no books. A ready reckoner, a manual of navigation, Moll's geography, a wage book, the Bible, and the Book of Common Prayer, were the only books belonging to the good old Captain. Nor in all Lynn, save for the learned shelves of the Vicar and the Curate of St. Nicholas, are there any books. It is not a town which reads or asks for books. Why, even on market-days you will not see any stall for the sale of books, such as may be seen every week at Cambridge and at Norwich, and even at Bury St. Edmunds. 'Tis, perhaps, a pity that so many gentlemen, substantial merchants, and sea-captains never read books. For their knowledge of the outer world and the nations they trust to the sailors, who, to tell the truth, know as much as any books can tell them. But sailors are not always truthful."

Those readers of "The Lady of Lynn" who know the old port of Fenland, will easily recognise most of the scenes and places described in the novel; for Sir Walter Besant was not content to write without a personal acquaintance with the town. It preserves, he says through his hero—

"in spite of neglect and oblivion, more of the appearance of age than most towns. The Guildhall, where they show the sword and the silver cup of King John, is an ancient and noteworthy building; there are the old churches; there are almshouses and hospitals; there is a Custom House, which the Hollanders enviously declare

must have been brought over from their country and set up here, so much does it resemble their own buildings. Our streets are full of remains. Here a carving in marble; here a window of ancient shape, cut in stone; here a piece of carved work from some ancient chantry chapel; here a deserted and mouldering court; here a house overhanging, gabled, with carved front; here a courtyard, with an ancient house built round it; and with the narrow streets such as one finds only in the most ancient parts of our ancient cities. We have still our winding lanes, with their irregularities; houses planted sideways as well as fronting the streets; an irregular alignment; gables instead of a flat coping; casement windows not yet transformed by the modern sash; our old taverns; our old walls; our old market-places; and the ancient bridges which span the four streams running through the midst of our town."

In saying that Lynn was without books save those found in the libraries of the clergy, Jack Pentecrosse did the town some injustice. He should have mentioned that the town boasts the possession of a famous "Red Register" or "Red Book of Bishop's Lenn," which dates from the nineteenth year of Edward III.'s reign, and is one of the earliest paper books in existence. This great treasure of the municipality, together with the town's famous cup, is preserved in a fireproof room at the Guildhall; but although it is of great interest to the antiquary and the student of the early forms of town government; and although it has added to our lists of curious surnames the remarkable one of William By-West-half-the-Water, its contents, considered as a whole, are more curious than entertaining. Of greater interest, from a literary point of view, is the fact that a nobleman who was intimately connected with Lynn, was the writer

of the first dated book printed by William Caxton, after that famous printer's arrival in England. This was Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, who lived at Middleton Towers, a fine castellated house of which the ancient gate-tower is still standing about four miles south-east of Lynn, near the main road to Castleacre and Swaffham. He has a place in history as the guardian of the young King Edward V. and a victim of Richard III.; and his is one of the ghosts called up by Shakespeare to haunt Richard on the eve of the battle of Bosworth; but it was some time before he was called upon to undertake the guardianship of his royal nephew, that this accomplished nobleman turned his attention to literature. His wife, Elizabeth Scales, through whom he inherited Middleton, died in 1474, and immediately afterwards he started on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Compostella. To beguile his voyage, a friend lent him Teonville's French version of "The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers," a work which so impressed him that he determined to render it into English. It was produced by Caxton on November 18th, 1477, and in a kind of epilogue the printer tells us that, at his patron's request, he had read the manuscript in order to correct any errors it might contain.

"I find nothing discordant therein," he writes, "save only in the dictes and sayings of Socrates. Wherein I find that my said lord hath left out certain and divers conclusions touching women. Whereof I marvel that my said lord hath not written them, nor what hath moved him so to do, nor what cause he had at the time. But I suppose that some fair lady hath desired him to leave it out of his book, or else he was amorous on

some noble lady, for whose love he would not set it in his book, or else for the very affection, love, and good will that he hath unto all ladies and gentlewomen, he thought that Socrates spared the sooth and wrote of women more than truth, which I cannot think that so noble a philosopher as Socrates was should write otherwise than truth. But I apperceive that my said lord knoweth verily that such defaults be not had nor found in the women born and dwelling in these parts nor regions of the world. Socrates was a Greek born in a far country from hence, which country is all of other conditions than this is. And men and women of other nature than they be here in this country. For I wot well, of whatsomever condition women be in Greece, the women of this country be right good, wise, pleasant, humble, discreet, sober, chaste, obedient to their husbands, true, secret, stedfast, ever busy and never idle, attemperate in speaking, and virtuous in all their works, or at least should be so."

In the February of the following year, Caxton issued for Earl Rivers, a translation of the "Proverbs of Christine of Pisa," and about twelve months later his version of the "Cordyale," in which the printer, after recording the Earl's devotion to works of piety, remarks of him—

"It seemeth that he conceiveth well the mutability and the unstableness of the present life, and that he desireth with a great zeal and spiritual love our ghostly help and perpetual salvation, and that we shall abhor and utterly forsake the abominable and damnable sins which commonly be nowadays."

It is a rather "far cry" from King's Lynn to Langham, a pleasant little village about two miles south

of Blakeney and seven from the quaint old coast town of Wells; but there are few readers of sea stories who have not, at one time or another, come under the spell of the author of "Jacob Faithful" and "Peter Simple," and to such this somewhat isolated village—it is five miles from the nearest railway station—must have some interest as having been for several years the home of Captain Marryat. A more fitting place than Langham for a sailor to settle down in after an adventurous life abroad and afloat could hardly have been chosen; for amid its quiet country scenes he could find complete rest and change, yet within a mile or so of the bounds of the village are the tidal flats which border the North Sea, and on stormy nights, if he lay awake and thought of storms and dangers past, he could always hear the roaring of the waves as they broke upon the shingle ridges beyond the meal marshes at Wells. Indeed, in his own immediate neighbourhood he could easily have found inspiration for the writing of a stirring romance of the sea; for in the very next village of Cockthorpe those two gallant admirals, Sir Cloudesley Shovel and Sir John Narborough were born; while Salthouse, only a few miles away, claims Sir Christopher Myngs, another famous seaman, as its own; and Burnham Thorpe, in the same neighbourhood, has world-wide renown as the birth-place of Lord Nelson. That Captain Marryat was influenced in his choice of a place of residence by these associations is unlikely; but by making Langham his country home he linked his name, not only with that of our greatest admiral, but with those of three old sea heroes England must always hold in high esteem, and he added something to that

atmosphere of briny romance which clings to this out-of-the-way corner of the Norfolk coast.

The estate Captain Marryat purchased consisted of about a thousand acres, with two farms, which he at first let to tenants, reserving Langham Manor, with its gardens and shrubberies, for himself. The house, which has now made way for a more imposing one, was a thatched cottage in the Elizabethan style, built after the model of one at Virginia Water belonging to King George IV., and having latticed windows opening on to flights of stone steps ornamented with flowers. He first occupied it about the year 1830, when, soon after his arrival, he invited Washington Irving to be his guest. Irving wrote—

"I shall be delighted to pay you a visit at your new place, not only from the description you give me of it, which has something wild and engaging, but also from the strong inclination I feel to be on sociable terms with you;"

but the promised visit seems never to have taken place, for the dullness of the country, after a lengthy spell of town life, proved greater than the gallant captain could bear. Before two years had elapsed he was back in London; nor did he settle down at Langham until fifteen years later, when he retired here for the rest of his life. Writing to his brother-in-law, Bury Palliser, in May, 1834, he said: "I have just come back from Norfolk, where I had the pleasure of getting no rent, because why—the tenant hadn't got none." His tenants appear to have given him a great deal of trouble; for a year or two later, writing to his sister, Mrs. Palliser, he said—

"Land is a plague; I shall sell mine if I can. My tenant, after all I have done for him, has been behaving very ill by all accounts, cutting down my timber and allowing people to shoot my game. I shall have him out in a very few days, as soon as I can ascertain the truth."

In the course of the next few weeks, however, matters much improved. He let the larger part of Langham "to a good responsible man for twelve years," his new tenant undertaking to bring a decoyman to work a small lake on the estate, and to pay, not only a high rent for the land, but £90 for the right of fishing and taking ducks.

But in the summer of 1843, Marryat himself settled down at the Manor Cottage, and, finding that the land had again been allowed to get into a bad state—through the neglect of a tenant who had also fitted up the drawing-room of the Cottage with a row of beds to let to tramps at twopence a night!—he determined to try and farm it himself. He built model cottages and up-to-date pigsties; talked learnedly of guano, and made himself acquainted with the pedigree of his favourite bull, Ben Brace; mounted his pony Dumpling, a cream-coloured Hanoverian with a black hogged mane and long tail, and went out shooting with the neighbouring squires; and, as he was somewhat short-sighted, usually wore a curious eyeglass surrounded by a strip of whale-bone, the ends of which, bound together, formed a long handle, which was stuck through a hole cut in the brim of his hat. As a sportsman he was enthusiastic, and as an agriculturist he was painstaking: but for all that he was, Miss Florence Marryat tells us, "a farmer in theory



MANOR COTTAGE, LANGHAM

THE NORFOLK HOME OF CAPTAIN MARRYAT

only, and not in practice." He was very popular with his farm-hands, owing to his bluff good-nature ; and for poachers he had a strong liking, much to the indignation of his brother magistrates. He was wise enough, however, to make one of the worst poachers his gamekeeper. So long as his health was good, he rose at five every morning to inspect his farm ; and his upright, broad-shouldered figure, clad in a suit of velveteen, together with his massive thoughtful forehead, deep-set grey eyes, and grey hair hanging almost down on to his shoulders, invariably attracted the attention even of those who were unacquainted with him and had no idea that he was one of the most popular authors of his day. Frequently he was a guest at Holkham, the seat of the Earl of Leicester, and Raynham, the old home of the Townshends ; but one of his chief cronies was Lieutenant Thomas, who was in charge of the coastguards at Morston, a neighbouring coast village. Upon this old sailor he was fond of playing practical jokes, and it is said that on one occasion, when Thomas insisted on leaving Langham when Marryat wished him to stay, the Captain despatched his bloodhound after him, causing him to take to a tree and stay in its branches all night.

The most popular of Marryat's books were written before he came to live at Langham ; but during the years he spent here he was always an industrious writer. He usually wrote in a long narrow dining-room, the walls of which were hung with the originals of Clarkson Stanfield's illustrations for "Poor Jack" ; at his feet crouched his two favourite dogs, Zinny and Juno, while from the window he could look out upon the lawn where

Ben Brace was generally allowed to graze. His first important work after settling down in his country home was the writing of the "Travels of Monsieur Violet," formerly credited with being based upon the experiences of Chateaubriand, but really on the travels of a young Frenchman who visited Langham for the express purpose of relating his adventures. His name was Lasalle, and he astonished the natives of the district by performing war-dances and lassoing horses on the Manor Farm. Among the romances subsequently produced by Marryat at Langham were "Masterman Ready" (in part), "The Settlers," "The Privateersman," "Valerie," and "The Children of the New Forest." Some of these are still favourites with boys, who have always been Marryat's greatest admirers; while others are reprinted nearly every year in one or another of the many cheap editions of standard works.

Marryat died at Langham early in the morning of August 4th, 1848. During his last lingering illness, though sadly weak, he was cheerful and uncomplaining, and gentle as a little child. Frequent doses of morphia were given him to ease his pain, and kept him for hours in a dreamy condition, in which he held imaginary conversations with his dear friend Charles Dickens, Bulwer, or some of his old shipmates. At his own request, his funeral was a very simple one, the mourners walking to the little Langham Church. The men working on the estate carried him to the grave, and were followed by a number of bluejackets from the neighbouring coastguard station, who had volunteered to be the bearers. In the church is a marble tablet inscribed, "Sacred to the Memory of Captain Frederick

Marryat, R.N., C.B., F.R.S., Member of the Legion of Honour, who died at Langham, August 9th, 1848. Aged 56 years." The tablet also bears the names of two of Marryat's sons, one of whom was lost at sea in the *Avenger*.

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