

IGHTHAM MOTE.

NOTES BY AYMER VALLANCE.

OF the various proprietors, real or reputed, of Ightham Mote, none appears to have done anything specially noteworthy, whether for good or ill, until late in the fifteenth century, when, all of a sudden, the then owner, Sir Richard Haute, burst startlingly (to use a modern phrase) into the limelight, and was involved in the very thick of the intrigues of the day. It happened that, at the moment of the death of the King, Edward IV, in April, 1483, the office of Controller of the Household to Edward, Prince of Wales, King Edward's eldest son and heir, was held by Richard Haute, who thus, through his close association with Lords Rivers and Grey, became implicated in their plot to purloin the person of the young king, and to prevent his coming in contact with his uncle, Richard of Gloucester. Notwithstanding Gloucester was the one individual whom the late King's will had nominated sole guardian of the boy, and Protector. The conspiracy was foiled only by the prompt action of the Duke of Gloucester, who caused Rivers, Grey and Richard Haute to be arrested on the spot, and taken in custody to Pontefract Castle in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where they were confined, while Edward V, whose abduction had been stopped just in time by Gloucester's arrival at Stony Stratford, went on thence with his uncle Richard to London, to prepare for his coronation.

Convincing proof of the guilt of the prisoners having come to light, Richard Haute and the two others were beheaded at Pontefract on June 25th, 1483. Sir Richard Haute's estates might well have been escheated to the crown on account of his treasonable conduct, but King Richard III, as Gloucester had now become, was not vindictive. Another Richard Haute, presumably son of the executed rebel, was allowed to succeed to the estate of

Ightham Mote, and might have continued to enjoy it, if only he had had the sense to keep out of mischief. But the Duke of Buckingham's rebellion in the autumn of 1483 proved an occasion too tempting for Haute to resist. The story of the Maidstone sector of that misconceived and disastrous venture has been ably told by our President's daughter in the thirty-seventh volume of *Archæologia Cantiana*. Richard Haute of Ightham was prominent among those who took part in it, and who, in consequence, were convicted of high treason, and condemned by the Parliament, which assembled in January, 1484, to the forfeiture of all their estates. Owing to the King's clemency, however, Richard Haute was spared from having to pay the full penalty of high treason. He did indeed suffer the confiscation of his manor of Ightham Mote, but he was actually pardoned on March 14th of the following year 1485. Meanwhile Ightham Mote had been granted for "good service against the rebels" to one James Haute—obviously a relative of the dispossessed Richard.

It has been stated by Hasted and other authorities that, when forfeited, the manor of Ightham Mote was granted by Richard III to his loyal servant, Sir Robert Brackenbury, who was Lieutenant of the Tower of London, and who ultimately fell in defence of his master at the fatal field of Bosworth. But Hasted and the rest are in error, due to a confusion between the two Motes, viz. that outside Maidstone and that of Ightham. The Rev. C. Eveleigh Woodruff kindly supplies the reference to the original document, out of which the mistake must without doubt have arisen. An entry in the Patent Rolls, dated March 9th, 1484, records the "grant to Richard Brackenbury, Esquire of the body, for his good services against the rebels, of the manors or lordships of Mote, Marden, Detling, and Newenton, and all lands, rents and services of the same, late of Antony, Earl Rivers." Now, not only is it inconceivable that this grant should refer to the identical property which had been bestowed, but two days previously, on quite a different person, viz. James Haute; but further Lord Rivers never

had anything to do with Ightham Mote, whereas he had been the owner of the Mote, Maidstone. It is this latter property, then, and not Ightham Mote, which is meant as that which the record says was granted to Robert Brackenbury. In the third year of his reign, i.e. between August, 1487, and August, 1488, Henry VII reinstated the heirs of Richard Haute in the possession of the estate of their fathers.

As to the building itself, in default of records showing by whom and when it was erected, one can but judge by internal evidence. The oldest portions appear to date from the reign of Edward III (1327 to 1377) and late, rather than early, within those limits. The house is a picturesque blend of styles and materials, some of it being of stone, varied by brickwork, and some of timber framing. The absence of uniformity throughout gives a peculiar charm to the building. The plan is that of a quadrangle, somewhat irregular in outline, and such that seems to have evolved rather than to have been schemed in quadrangular form from the outset.

As in the case of the normal dwelling of mediæval build the nucleus of Ightham Mote must have been the great hall, from which wings would spread in either direction, and, as increased accommodation came to be required, would be returned to right and left, and finally joined up, constituting a fourth range; the ultimate result being a hollow square or quadrangle, just as in the case of a number of large domestic buildings, particularly the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. Unlike colleges, however, Ightham Mote, on account of its isolated situation, was unable to dispense with certain defensive precautions. Hence it is surrounded by a wet moat.

The detached block of timber-framed buildings which stand a little distance to west of the main quadrangle and are commonly known as the Old Stables, may be compared with the Gatehouse, which is situated in an analogous position at Stokesay Castle, Shropshire. Both formerly (as the Gatehouse at Stokesay does to this day) constituted

the principal way of access to the mansion itself. The old Gatehouse at Ightham no longer serves its original purpose, a newer approach having been provided from the south.

The immediate entrance into the quadrangle, after one has crossed a bridge over the moat, is a passage under the gate-tower in the middle of the western range. For the sake of security the ancient bridge, instead of being, as now, a fixed, solid structure, must have been a wooden drawbridge. The opening under the gate-tower is closed by a pair of massive oak folding doors, in one of which, as in the case of the ancient doorway at New College, Oxford, is cut a smaller door or wicket, for foot passengers. The heavy framework encloses panels of linenfold ornament, which, in order to adapt them to the outline of the arch above, as is the case also at St. James's Palace, London, are fashioned askew, or "on the rake", at the top. This peculiar treatment is sufficiently uncommon to be worth noting wherever it happens to occur.

The great hall is, as usual, on the opposite side of the quadrangle to the entrance; and the kitchen, not far off, is placed at the south-east angle of the building. Further north, in the same eastern range, is a stone-vaulted crypt beneath a lofty apartment with an open wagon-roof. This was originally designed, and no doubt served for a time as the domestic chapel. It has since been divided by the insertion of a floor, into two rooms, upper and lower, now converted into bedrooms, a later chapel having been built, late in the reign of Henry VII, or early in that of Henry VIII, on the south side of the quadrangle. This is the chapel now in use. It still retains its screen, a late Gothic work in oak, which is of rectangular construction, as distinct from screen-work designed for vaulting. The fenestration tracery is the earliest feature of the screen, and may date so far back as the reign of Richard II. The screen has no gates.

There are three figures of ancient glass in the windows. One light on the south side depicts the Blessed Virgin and Child, another St. John Baptist and one, on the north side, St. George and the Dragon. The saint's head is missing and

its place has been clumsily repaired. His lamboys, or petticoats, are of a very vivid green, which is alone sufficient to prove that the glass of these figures cannot be an English product. In fact the strong colouring of the figures in general suggests a foreign origin, probably Dutch. The date of the glass is about 1530.

The Chapel has a cradle roof, and the intermediate spaces between the rafters are filled in, or ceiled, with boarding, upon the surface of which, in the early years of the sixteenth century, a series of heraldic badges of considerable interest was painted, comprising the Rose, the Fleur de Lys, Portcullis, Pomegranate, Rose and Pomegranate conjoined by dimidiation, the Castle, and the Sheaf of arrows. Of these the red Rose of Lancaster needs no comment. As to the Fleur de Lys, it is well known as having constituted the arms of France—arms which, in token of his claim to the crown of France, were assumed by Edward III in 1340, and thenceforward continued to be quartered with the Leopards of England down to the reign of George III, when, in 1801, this gratuitous affront to our neighbours was abandoned. The portcullis is the cognisance of the Beauforts. Natural children of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by Catherine Swynford, they took the surname Beaufort from their father's estate in Anjou where they were born. The portcullis became annexed as a badge of English royalty through Henry Tydder, who was descended from the Beauforts on his mother's side, and who, having invaded this country, and slain King Richard III in battle in 1485, succeeded to the throne himself with the style of Henry VII. The latter's eldest son, named Arthur, to emphasize the father's pretensions to be sprung from the mythical kings of Early Britain, married, in 1501, Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, under whom the two principal kingdoms of Spain were united. It was in their glorious reign that Spain attained its zenith, succeeding in freeing itself finally, after nearly 800 years' intrusion, from the hated domination of the Moors. The last great Moorish fortress to hold out was Granada, which

fell in January, 1493 ; and it was in proud memory of this splendid achievement that the Spanish royal house appropriated the badge of the pomegranate. Now, the pomegranate, not being a fruit indigenous to this country, does not appear ever to have been used in England as an ornamental motif previously to the sixteenth century. It was then introduced on the occasion of the Spanish match, which was immensely popular, helping as it did to raise England to the level of a first-rank power in Europe. The rose and pomegranate dimidiated, like two coats of arms impaled, represented the marriage of the English prince with the Spanish princess. The other Spanish devices introduced at the same time were the Castle, emblem of Castile, and the Sheaf of arrows, emblem of Aragon.

Unfortunately Prince Arthur died on April 2nd, 1502, at Ludlow Castle, Shropshire, the official residence of the Prince of Wales. It was a terrible nemesis for King Henry, since the cause of his son's death was none other than the dreaded sweating sickness, which had been brought to these shores by the agency of the Prince's own father. Henry Tydder, when he came over to wrest the crown from Richard Plantagenet, had in his service a gang of mercenaries, who were the very scum of the continent, and who spread in their wake that malignant infection, which, ravaging the capital, not only postponed Henry's own coronation, but afterwards killed his cherished first-born, and scourged the people of England intermittently over a period little short of seventy years.

Seven years after the death of Prince Arthur, his widow, Catherine of Aragon, was married, on June 11th, 1509, to his brother, by that time King Henry VIII. Thus the same heraldic devices, which had done duty in honour of the elder brother's marriage, obtained a renewed vogue ; nor was it until Henry VIII, having cast lascivious eyes on Anne Boleyn, proceeded to repudiate his wife, of whom he had grown tired, that the Spanish emblems, because of what they signified, fell out of favour. Although, then, the casual visitor may deem the painted roof of the

Chapel at Ightham a sample of decoration of no particular interest nor importance, it proves to be, when examined attentively, an eloquent compendium of the history of the period, as well as being an exceedingly beautiful ornament. Unhappily the painting is now much faded.

A few years ago, as reported in the newspapers at the time, an accidental fire did some damage to the interior of the Chapel at Ightham Mote. But it was not this sixteenth century chapel which actually suffered, but the disused fourteenth century one. It would indeed have been an irreparable calamity had ill befallen the existing chapel with its magnificent painted roof.

As to that particular form of decoration for wall-surfaces which we call "wall-paper" and the French "*papier peint*," it is sometimes asserted to be a perfectly modern art. It is true that, about the middle of the nineteenth century, the late William Morris took it in hand, and by his genius transfigured it and raised it up from the utter degradation into which it had fallen, so that he practically created a new industry. Nevertheless printed wall-papers are no novelty. In May, 1911, during repairs to the Master's Lodge at Christ's College, Cambridge, there were uncovered some exquisite fragments of block-printed paper, which not without good reason were assigned to about the year 1509. This example is probably the earliest one extant. Two more designs of wall-papers of later date, attributed respectively to about 1600 and 1650, were discovered in 1896 by Mr. P. M. Johnston, F.S.A., in bedrooms at Borden Hall, near Sittingbourne. The decoration in the drawing room at Ightham Mote is noteworthy, as an instance of Chinese wall-paper, introduced, no doubt, under the influence of the pseudo-Chinese taste of the Chippendale period. Another somewhat similar specimen exists in a room at Milsted Manor, near Sittingbourne.

It is sometimes objected that moated houses must be very damp. But such is evidently not the case at Ightham Mote, else the owner would never keep his books, as he does, on the ground floor, where the Library is situated in the

south range, close upon the moat. What may be the reason why the books are not ruined by damp I cannot tell. I remember once visiting Playford Hall, some four miles from Ipswich. It is an Elizabethan house, built of brick, and surrounded by a moat, which, as at Ightham Mote, comes right up to one at least of the walls. To my surprise the armoury at Playford, which is actually below the level of the moat, was perfectly free from moisture. I should have expected to find the armour in such a situation red with rust; and on remarking upon it to the owner, he told me that he had found, in the old building accounts, certain items of the purchase of West India sugar for mixing with the mortar to consolidate it and keep the walls dry. But though this might be so at Playford, it does not explain the dryness of Ightham Mote, which was built before the discovery of America, and therefore at a time when no sugar was available, the only known sweetening medium being honey. In certain circumstances molasses is still used in building.

To sum up, Ightham Mote is obviously, both without and within, of various dates, age after age having contributed from the fourteenth century onward to produce a result which is as irregular as it is æsthetically satisfying and delightful.

Volumes XXIV and XXVII of *Archæologia Cantiana* contain admirable accounts of Ightham Mote.