HISTORY OF HITCHIN

HITCHIN FROM WINDMILL HILL

THE HISTORY OF HITCHIN

By Reginald L. Hine

VOL. I

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I

DEDICATE

WHATEVER IS OF SOUND LEARNING AND GOOD REPORT

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES

TO MY PREDECESSORS, MAURICE JOHNSON,

ISAAC JAMES, WM. DUNNAGE AND FREDERIC SEEBOHM

FOR THEIR PREPARATION;

TO MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW-TOWNSMEN

FOR THEIR CO-OPERATION;

TO THOSE WHO COME AFTER

FOR THEIR EMULATION

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(It is hoped to publish this second and concluding volume in December 1928 or in April 1929, at the same prices.)

BY GRACIOUS PERMISSION A COPY OF THIS HISTORY OF THE ROYAL MANOR OF HITCHIN HAS BEEN PRESENTED BY THE AUTHOR TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING, AND A FURTHER COPY TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES

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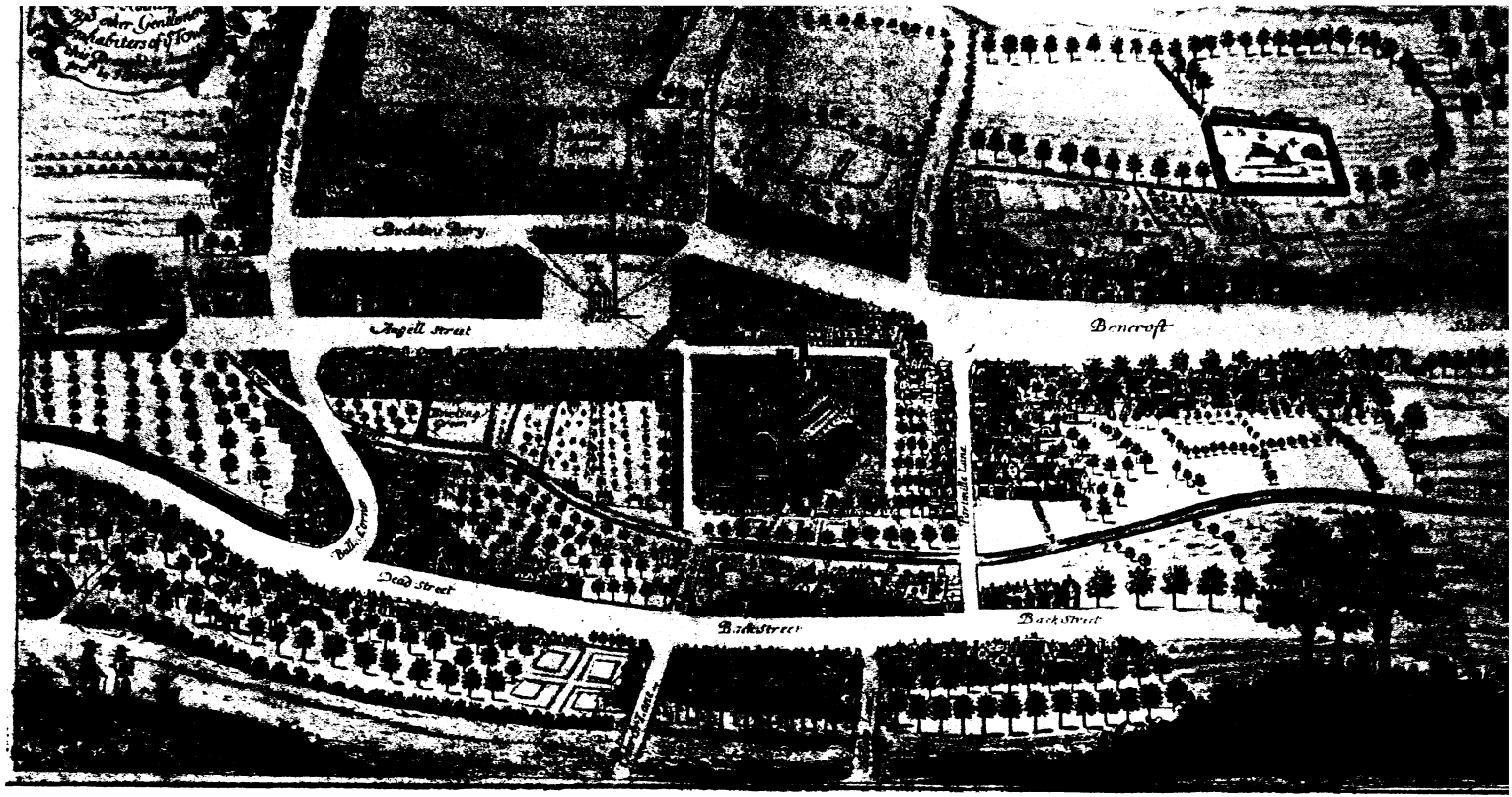
DIRECTIONS TO THE READER

1. The authorities for all statements of fact are fully set out and numbered in the Bibliography at the end of the volume. In the text only the denoting number is given. Where the authority is of a general character and is frequently employed, the page, and if necessary the volume, of the particular reference is added. Thus (301) at the end of a sentence means that the work or manuscript so numbered in the Bibliography is a sufficient reference; (402. 27) signifies the work or manuscript so numbered and its 27th page or folio; (392. 2. 46) shows that the second volume and the 46th page or folio of the work numbered as 392 should be consulted.

2. Footnotes are distinguished by Roman numerals.

3. The index to both volumes will be found in Volume II.

4. Will those readers and reviewers who discover any errors in the text kindly bring them to the notice of the author, so that they may be set right in the *Corrigenda* in Volume II?



MAP OF THE TOWN OF HITCHIN

Executed by Drapentier, a Dutch artist, for Chauncy's *History of Hertfordshire*, 1700

INTRODUCTION

'If any there be which are desirous to be strangers in their owne soile and forrainers in their owne citie, they may so continue and therein flatter themselves; for such I have not written these lines nor taken these paines.'—Camden's Britannia, 1610, 'To the Reader,' p. 2.

I

AS in the making of a map, once its outline is decided, we turn with something like relief to dot in the towns and castles, the meandering rivers and the fields of battle; so in mapping out the future of the delightful realm of history modern writers are recognizing that its broad lines are laid down at last beyond much risk of alteration, and that they may begin to explore the interior—much of it still virgin ground—and fill in the detail of what they may discover.

It is good to have reached that point. One doubts sometimes if the historians have not been dwelling too long over the riddles of the universe, the chicanery of counsellors, the dark and indecipherable policies of kings. But who shall spend his days unprofitably, handling the plain stuff of which humanity is made, as laid out solid, homely and good to see in these hamlets and market-towns that have kept the traditions and pieties—and are indeed the heart—of England? It has been the fashion to smile pitifully upon those obscure writers who will expend a lifetime of 'assiduous pedantry and anxious archæology,' compiling the history of a parish for a select body of subscribers. Some of them undoubtedly deserve their disrepute. They are prone to give a false worship to the past just because it is old and smelleth mustily. Certainly it is no mean thing 'to save and recover something from the deluge of time,' and we might even defend the method of those who choose to have it 'written down old, with all the characters of age.' But, after all, dullness is to be avoided, and discrimination is needed for a book that is to be read. When we might re-create the memory of what is worthiest in the olden time, what a pity to rake about its refuse-heaps and drag up to the light of day what were better left to go down the gutters of

oblivion. Any reasonable person would agree with Emerson that it is not seemly 'to be frivolous before the admirable reserve and prudence of time,' yet is there nothing brighter to record than the customary tale of bovates and carucates, pedigrees of manors, terriers of glebe lands, feet of fines and inquisitions *ad quod damnum*? Now and again you may be startled with a cry—a piercingly human cry—out of the heart of documents like these. But seldom in such waste and dreary places, and perhaps only when your man of research is also a man of feeling and a man of letters, can the listening reader catch the still, sad music of humanity that comes to us, as Carlyle used to say, 'in a small flute voice across the loud Disturbances.'

It is in the chronicles of a country town, nevertheless, that you ought to hear that flute-like voice. The County Histories, though printed very pompously in folio, can hardly expect to delve at all deeply into the delightful particulars of each parish. There is just time to glance at the Domesday entry, to notice the Lords of the Manor and those whom they begat, to copy an inscription or two from the tombs of 'the substantialest inhabitants of this parish.' Then the author must hurry away. The parish historian on the other hand—a humble, spade-work sort of man—can slowly dig himself into his subterranean subject, burrow in all directions and explore the lives of the common or groundling people. In broken pieces, here and there, he may chance upon the tale of submerged humanity's nine-tenths, a tale racy indeed of the soil, and one that for the most part still remains to be told. That is pioneer work that should lure any venturesome spirit to go hopefully on in seemingly hopeless places. At the worst, if he cannot break through the taciturnity of time or persuade the graves of memory to render up their dead, he may rejoice to have tried; for, as a wise man once observed in highly comfortable words, 'it is a noble sort of folly that sets a man meditating on time past.'

II

There is another comfort which the parish historian needs to hug to his heart. His little corner of the universe, wherein he seems to sit alone whispering to himself, is the universe itself; or, as old writers were fond of saying, *speculum mundi*—a little mirror of the world. However the lords of creation

despise him, he may hold up his head, for the story of an English town is the story of England itself; and I am not sure whether the spectacle of human life is not more vividly seen refracted through the private experience of a single parish. The meek and lowly chronicler can really have it both ways. He may either exalt himself amongst the historians and inherit the whole earth, or he may resolve to be abased. On the one hand he may say: 'This is my parish of Hitchin. There is nothing quite like it in the land. I am very proud of it. Like Plutarch of old, I live in a little town, and I choose to live there out of fear it should become still less. Are we not happy and highly fortunate, I and my fellow-townsmen, still to be a small family of folk; self-contained, dwelling stubbornly within our borders; inspired yet not enslaved by the story of our past; thriving, yet not overweeningly ambitious; possessing substance, yet not starving the soul; toiling away for a livelihood, yet not altogether neglectful of the gentle art of living? The tale of all this, if I condescend to set it down, shall be as of something precious and set apart. I am not disposed to slip my scholarly mite into the general bag of knowledge. Rather will I make a choice volume for these few.'

That on the one hand; and, on the other, if he be more spaciously minded, he may say: 'I have beaten the parish bounds and found them to contain the whole creation. I have stood by a stall in the market-place and trafficked with the Indies. I have gossiped with John Stiles in the street and heard in his voice the voices of all the children of men.'

With a township like this of Hitchin, 'not wholly in the busy world nor quite beyond it,' one might with reason follow either method. At first sight the spirit of the place would appear to be one of isolation and repose. 'We are a quiet people,' as Charles Paternoster of Hitchin used to say, 'and we live in a quiet town.' Tucked away in the northernmost corner of Hertfordshire, we maintain our calm and settled security, our home-bred virtues, our local attachments. We are tempted occasionally to make a stir in the world, but prefer on the whole to abide as a modest country town, lying out of the highway of innovation and having the quaint seal of antiquity upon its title-deeds. For centuries we have preserved this serenity of character, which has always attracted the strangers to our gates. It is only fair there should be some

advantages of obscurity; and, in spite of the ravages of time and the necessities of trade, we may claim to be one of the few towns left in England which people still love to visit for the antique grace of their streets and habitations. Many disquieted, cosmopolitan people have been glad to rest awhile in this 'lukewarmish, afternoonish kind of place'; and we still have with us those shy creatures and old-fashioned flowers that abandon all noxious and distracted towns. We have a family now of fourteen thousand people, but the swallows return each spring to build beneath our eaves; the pink valerian still perches on our garden walls; the breath of lavender and hay steals even into those courts and yards and alleys of ours that never see the sun.

III

That is the first impression; and, if that were all, this task might be given over to the placid pen of an essayist. Put on the horn spectacles of the historian, however, and you will discover a different Hitchin. One fact is suddenly clear. This tranquil, stay-at-home quality we have described goes but a little way back. One can trace its beginning in the early eighteenth century, when this royal manor became incongruously inhabited by a race of Quakers. Estimable people, one and all, for ever pottering about the parish relieving the sick and poor, or sitting in twilight contemplation under the brim of their irremovable hats. But undoubtedly their grey habits, their staid, unaltering ways, obscured the tradition of an earlier Hitchin, with its life a coat of many colours and its fortune a sequence of strange vicissitudes. After such long restraint, the historian is tempted to make the earlier record more lurid than it was. He is maliciously pleased to show what centuries this peaceful community has spent in breaking the peace; what a worldly life this unworldly recluse has led. Behind these prim Georgian plaster fronts, he loves to reveal the ruddy Jacobean brick; behind that again, the rough timbers of the pent-houses that once trespassed as stalls upon the street; and behind them again, the remains of some wool-stapler's house with concealed cupboards and hiding-places in the wall. So, one by one, the Hitchin family skeletons are brought to light, the masks of modern respectability exposed.

Assuredly this old township has had its share of evil but

it would be quite wrong, on the other hand, to represent it as altogether ferocious and depraved. With an instinct of self-preservation, developed to the point of genius, it has learnt how to elude the princedoms, principalities and powers, and to step aside, just in the nick of time, out of the storms of war and revolution. It has touched history at many points, yet without serious contamination. It has played with fire, but its scars are not so much ghastly as mildly picturesque.

Happily for the historian, the town has preserved not only its soul, but its records too. The reader may judge something of their extent from the bibliography that ends each volume; but the author, who has lived with them for twenty years and compared them with the archives of other counties, believes that no town of its rank in England can boast such heirlooms as those of Hitchin. That, indeed, is the justification of this work, and it is that which has attracted other historians to aid in its preparation. I have been fortunate to supplement my lean and low ability with the ample scholarship of such (to name but a few) as Dr. J. Charles Cox, Sir William St. John Hope, Mr. William Page, Sir Paul Vinogradoff, Professor A. Hamilton Thompson, the Right Hon. Sidney Webb, Dr. Rufus Jones, Canon C. W. Foster, and Cardinal Gasquet. In the beginning of this enterprise—twelve long years ago—I was being supported by a cardinal, three bishops, two deans, a prebendary, two archdeacons, a canon and nine professed historians; but, one by one, carried off by treacherous death or their private preoccupations, they have fallen away and left me to finish alone.

That little word *Finis*, how hard it is to write! To the making of a book for a parish such as this—so ancient and so crowded with documents—there is, indeed, no end. Always there is something to add; constantly there is something to correct. And therein to the too fastidious historian lurks an unsuspected danger. Every time I go into my study I am confronted with five manuscript histories of Hitchin, the first of which was planned as far back as 1720—each setting out with an easy and confident air on a task that was never accomplished (i). That disquieting reminder has prompted me

i. The pen dropped from the fingers of my predecessor, Maurice Johnson, after ten years of labour; from those of William Dunnage after fifteen; from those of Isaac James after thirty-five. See Bibliography, Nos. 19, 28, 21.

to put one half of my affairs in order and write this introduction for a book that is still in the making. However imperfect and unfinished it may be, it is my contribution to that final record of fully ascertained fact which, as Bacon observed, is a work to be done 'by many and not by one, and in the succession of ages, though not in the hour-glass of one man's life.'

After years of 'study of old ledger-books, the ransacking of mouldy parchments and examining overworn and blind records,' Sir Henry Chauncy, our county historian, wondered how much he could stay to rescue from the deluge of time. And so in my turn do I. Here, nevertheless, I cry halt at last; and, if one must grieve that the half has not been told, it is a comfort to remember that a work which would have been exhaustive would also have been exhausting, if not impossible, to read; and would scarcely have been finished for the grandchildren of its first subscribers.

'Go littel boke (ii)
Thee lowly submytting to al correction. . . .
Hertelie all beseeching with humbil salutation
Thee to accept, and thus to take in glee
For ever to be a servant within our commonaltie.'

ii. Before the last page of the second volume has been turned it is likely that the reader will rail against the author for using this word 'littel'; but even to humour him I could not bring myself to alter so graceful a quotation.

VILLEINS REAPING THE LORD'S CORN UNDER THE BAILIFF'S EYE

From British Museum MS. Roy. 2 B. VII, f. 78b (Q. Mary's Psalter, English of early fourteenth century)

THE HISTORY OF HITCHIN

THE MANOR (i)

I

IT was a true saying of Sir Edward Coke that 'copy-holders, though very meanly descended, yet come of an ancient house.' How ancient, indeed, it waits for the wise men to discover, though Breton (*d.* 1275), a considerably older authority than Coke, goes so far as to say that 'villeins began shortly after the Flood.' Far back as their researches go, such explorers as Seebohm, Maitland, Vinogradoff, Round have yet to come within sight of a beginning. They peer into the recesses of recorded time, but are faced at furthest with a manorial system already established by long custom, primitive in its usages still, but in settled working order. There, clear enough, are the limits of the lord's demesne, and his house and chapel and priest's-chamber standing haughtily apart. There is the waste of the manor with a few beasts upon it foraging for coarse feed and some bondwomen gathering sticks for fuel, or cutting reeds and rushes for the thatching of their huts and the beds, baskets and candles they will need within. In the uncleared portion beyond, the hogs can be heard trampling the undergrowth and rootling up the beech-nuts that have fallen from the trees. Here, there and everywhere are the villeins performing under the scowling eye of the bailiff, and in a slow and surly fashion, the 'week-works and boon-days' to be rendered to their lord; or more eagerly engaged in ploughing their own scattered strips from headland to headland and from balk to balk; finding no confusion or unfairness in what we are pleased to term 'the intolerable mingle-mangle of the open fields.' There, too, are

i. Just before his lamented death, the late Sir Paul Vinogradoff revised this chapter in manuscript and assisted the author with many notes and comments. To Professor A. Hamilton Thompson the author is equally indebted for subjecting this chapter to a second revision.

the bondmen, still more at the mercy of the upstart manor officials—slaves of the soil, 'who have no right to know at day-fall what they shall do on the morrow—*nec scire debeat sero quid facere debeat in crastino.*' You may watch them as they are driven about from one to another of 'their corporall and degrading services'; cleaning out the lord's dovecote and spreading the dung: fetching and carrying corn to his mill: hacking and hewing daylight into the dense forest all around. If you are there at harvest, you will see the priest picking out the thickest sheaves for his tithe before anything is touched. On Lammas Day (August 13th), if you get up early, you may meet the herdsman as he leads the cattle all afield together 'under the opening eyelids of the morn.' They make for the stubbles then, but after All Saints' they must use one or other of the green commons, according to the season. Then at Michaelmas or Candlemas Day, perhaps, the Steward will arrive to hold the Manor Court—a day of much excitement, and with some a day of reckoning. Woe betide those who fail to answer to their names when the roll of inhabitants is called for the tithing of our lord the King. Woe to those who fail to swear fealty and do homage to the lord of the manor. Woe to those who are presented in open court and are 'in mercy' for having sheltered fugitives, harboured lepers, assaulted the bailiff 'so as to draw blood,' polluted the fish-ponds of the lord, or broken the pound. All these evil-doings and their penalties are entered on the roll, along with the payments in silver or in kind for the right to do such pleasant things as the low estate of mere villeins does not allow, e.g. three pounds of pepper for permission to live outside the lord's liberty, a pair of capons—*merchetum carnis et sanguinis*—for licence to marry off a daughter, two thousand herrings to send a son to the clerical schools. Besides these the Steward must collect such quit-rents, reliefs, fines, heriots (ii), etc., as are due and of right accustomed. He must look into complaints of trespass, and go into claims of forfeiture, and find out the true heirs of deceased tenants. Finally, taking counsel with the Homage, he will re-allot the strips in the common fields and regulate the prices of flesh, fish and bread. So the Court is brought to a close and all is set in order for another year.

ii. The render of the best live beast or dead chattel or money payment to the lord on the decease of the tenant. O.E. *heregeatwa* (*here* = army + *geatwa* = trappings).

II

This rough outline may serve to give the reader a glimpse of life on the Manor of Hitchin as it was when written history began, and as it had perhaps been for centuries before. The earliest title-deed we possess is a twelfth-century manuscript entitled *De inventione Sanctæ Crucis nostræ in Monte Acuto et de ductione ejusdem apud Waltham* (92). The manuscript is written by one of the canons of Waltham, and tells how Tovi the Proud, Staller and Standard-Bearer of King Canute, being enraptured at the discovery of the Holy Cross upon his Somerset estate and at the miracles that attended its removal to Waltham, took off his splendid raiment, clothed himself in sackcloth, and with humbled voice and heart and many tears pronounced this adoration and these vows: ' " I adore Thee, O Christ, hanging on the tree for the salvation of the faithful, which this present likeness of Thy Passion represents to me. I adore Thee, O Lord, visiting Hell and triumphing among the holy souls over the powers of darkness. I adore Thee, rising from the dead, consummating in Thy death the death of the faithful. I adore thee, ascending to Heaven to Thy seat with the Father, and from there sending Thy spirit into the hearts of Thy disciples and of those who in purity follow Thee. To Thee be praise. To Thee be glory, honour and power everlasting for ever and ever. I devote and dedicate to Thee myself, and I give for ever whatever property I have in any way acquired, to wit: Waltham, Kelvedon, *Hicche* (iii), Lambeth, Loughton and Alvertun, for the support of all those who shall serve Thee." And having said this, he girded on to the Image (of the Crucified) the sword with which he had been first girded as a Knight; for henceforth he would be His Knight.'

According to the chronicle, Tovi was succeeded by a son, Athelstan, who, ' degenerating from the cleverness and wisdom of his father, lost many of these possessions, and among them Waltham, which, when Canute and Hardicanute, his son, were dead, King Edward of blessed memory gave to Earl Harold.' In his turn, Earl Harold undertook to endow the church of Waltham, for he had attributed his recovery from an attack of paralysis to the prayers of the guardians of that place. The

iii. The earliest known form of Hitchin as a place-name.

rents of Hicche and the other manors which Tovi had assigned to the Church of the Holy Cross were not large enough to keep more than two priests in very humble dwellings; but Harold, 'eager to exalt the place,' caused schools to be founded there under the direction of Ailard, his physician, and a collegiate church to be built by masons brought over from Normandy.

The chronicler proceeds: 'Foundations of a large church are rapidly laid; the walls rise; lofty columns at equal distances unite the walls with interlacing arcades or vaults; a roof of leaden plates keeps out the wind and weather; the number of clergy is increased from a shameful two to the mystic twelve of the company of the Apostles, that the same number of men who had told forth Christ's glory to the world might serve in eternal praise in the Temple of His Holy Cross. He also with a splendid liberality endowed them with estates and possessions, that they might have sufficient for their necessities, and he obtained a confirmation of these gifts by the King's authority.'

Altogether Harold bestowed eighteen manors on his new foundation, including 'Hitchche and all fields, pastures, meadows, woods and waters belonging thereto'; and his grant was confirmed by the Confessor in the Great Charter of Waltham, 1062. The two archbishops, Stigand and Ealdred, and eleven bishops, 'assembled at this confirmation by command of our Lord the King, do excommunicate and with perpetual curse condemn all transgressors against this princely and properly constituted gift.' Edith the Queen adds her name as a witness, along with eleven Abbots, five Earls, thirteen Princes, Regenbald the Chancellor, the King's two butlers, etc.—fifty-seven witnesses in all. Last of all comes the scribe: 'This have I, Swithar, written under the name of Christ' (89).

One thing is curious and remains unclear—that the *De Inventione* tract, in referring to this endowment, should mention two of the eighteen manors, Hicche and Lamhede (Lambeth), as being given not by Harold but by the King himself. 'The blessed King Edward,' so it runs, 'wishing to participate in so great a benefit, after the offerings of Earl Harold had been bestowed, when he had with his own hand and in the hearing of all confirmed the same by his own Charter written in letters of gold, he of his own bounty conferred upon the church Hicche

with all things belonging thereto in lands, meadows, pastures and waters, and Lamhede, as may be seen secured in the Charter of the same ' (92).

III

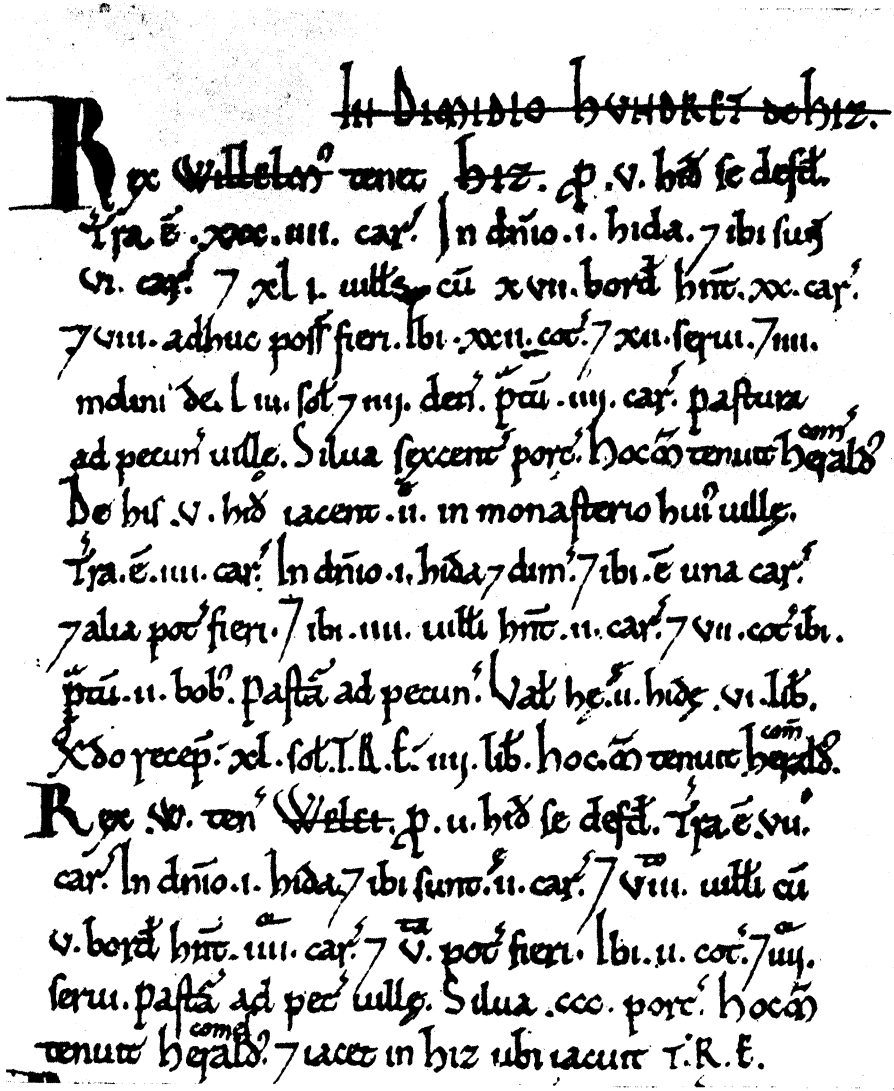
In spite of this solemn charter, with its cloud of witnesses and its excommunications, the Manor of Hicche was not long devoted to the service of ' the little band of brothers at Waltham, singing hymns and praises night and day to God and His Saints.' It is definitely stated in Domesday Book (1086), ' this manor Earl Harold held,' and some other entries in the survey of the neighbourhood make it tolerably certain that Harold by fair or foul means regained possession of what he had once dedicated to Holy Church (90. *a.* 272–3). Of Wymondley, for instance, it is recorded that ' this manor was in the demesne of the church of St. Mary of Chatteris, but Earl Harold took it from thence as all the Shire can witness and laid it to his manor of Hiz about three years before the death of King Edward,' at the very time when he was professing such devotion to the Church in his benefactions at Waltham (90. *a.* 272). Again, at Hexton, Harold is charged with adding ' to Hitchin by force and wrongfully as the Shire witnesses ' land which had been held by a man of St. Albans Abbey (90. *a.* 272). Maitland was undoubtedly justified in holding that ' a great deal of simple rapacity is laid to the charge of Harold by jurors whose testimony is not to be lightly rejected.' However, Harold was slain, and by right of conquest, as Domesday records, ' King William holds Hiz. It is assessed at five hides. There is land for thirty-four ploughs (each plough having a team of eight oxen). In the demesne (the Lord's portion of the manor) is one hide, and on it are six ploughs ; and forty-one villeins with seventeen bordars (holders of smaller tenements or crofts) have twenty ploughs between them. There might be eight more. There are twenty-two cottagers and twelve bondmen ; four mills worth fifty-three shillings and fourpence ; meadow sufficient for four plough-teams ; pasture sufficient for the cattle of the vill ; and pannage for six hundred hogs. This manor Earl Harold held. Of these five hides, two belong to the Minster (*monasterium*) of this vill. They have land enough for four ploughs. In demesne is one hide and a half, and there is one plough on it and there could

be another. Four villeins have two ploughs between them, and there are seven cottagers. Meadow is there sufficient for two oxen; pasture sufficient for the live stock. These two hides are worth six pounds; when received they were worth forty shillings; in King Edward's time worth four pounds. This manor Earl Harold held' (90. *a.* 302–4).

One or two distinctive features in the Hitchin survey should be pointed out. First of all it is evident that Hitchin had become the centre of a cluster of Hertfordshire manors which were farmed by the sheriff as a whole. The manors which belonged to or 'lay in' the great manor of Hitchin were Wymondley, Mendlesdene (Minsden), Welei (Preston), Westone, Waldenei (King's Walden), Wavedene (Wandon End), Cerletone (Charlton), Deneslai (Temple Dinsley), Offley, Welle (Wellbury), Wilei (Willian) Flesmere, Hexton, Lilley, Leglege (Ley Green), assessed at a total of thirty-seven and a half hides and containing therefore something like four thousand acres. 'In all,' say the inquisitors, 'Hiz with its appurtenances pays one hundred and six pounds weight of silver,' whilst the free rents brought in another forty pounds. Separate valuations are given of those sub-manors which had been annexed to Hiz by Harold and by two Norman sheriffs, Ilbert and Peter de Valoines; also in respect of the two hides belonging to the 'minster of the vill' (iv).

Another feature of the survey is the mention of 'avera' or carrying service due at the rate of one avera, valued at fourpence, for each hide, to be performed only 'when the King came into the Shire,' and 'inward' or bodyguard service. These services, distinctive of Herts and Cambs, show that the tenant performing them was 'a sokeman of the King.' In the survey of Hertfordshire it is only at Hitchin that one meets with the 'inward, and, as Mr. Horace Round has noted, the 'avera' was rendered to Hitchin itself, that is, to Harold instead of to the King's officer, as elsewhere in the shire. A good deal of trouble seems to have arisen over the imposition of 'avera' and 'inward,' and the

iv. What this 'minster of the vill' signifies it is hard to say. Mr. Seebohm always held that these two hides formed the whole estate at Hicche which Tovi had granted to Waltham. Mr. Horace Round, after noting the suspicious fact of Harold's ownership or resumption of possession, infers from its separate valuation that it had been taken out of the group of manors and restored to the church. 'It is not likely,' he adds, 'to have been given as a fresh endowment by William, and, if it had been, the fact would have been mentioned in Domesday' (90. *a.* 272).



REX WILLELM' TENET HIZ : THE DOMESDAY BOOK ENTRY

jurors of Deneslai roundly assert in the survey that their manor had been attached to Hiz 'by injustice and by force,' because the demand of 'avera' had been refused (90. *a*. 271).

IV

Some time in the reign of William Rufus the Manor of Hitchin was granted to Guy de Baliol, lord of Picardy, who for 'good and faithful service' at the time of the Conquest had already been presented with the baronies of Bywell in Northumberland and Gainford in Durham. The original charter of the Hitchin grant is lost, but Baliol's lordship is evidenced by an entry in the Catalogue of Benefactors to St. Albans Abbey: 'Wido de Bailul gave to St. Alban and the brothers for their maintenance one virgate of land in Hehstantune, i.e. Hexton' (91). As Hexton was still part and parcel of Hitchin, he can hardly have held one without the other. Of the ambitious and powerful family of Baliol who were the lords of Hitchin for two centuries till 1296, much has been written (155 & 160), and much might still be written. The theme is a tempting one; high-sounding names, tournaments and trappings of gold, favours and disfavours of kings, knights' fees and forfeitures, plots and counterplots, dungeons, rescues, braveries of battle, exiles and banishments—all the materials of romance are here. Oh, to be Froissart for one hour, and to write their chronicles in characters of gold! It is a temptation, nevertheless, to be sternly set aside. These Baliols belong not to this parish of Hitchin, but to this realm of England. We may not follow them there. Now and again, of course, they were in residence at Deneslai Castle; and at more frequent intervals after they had founded the Order of Templars there. But their vast estates—at one time thirty knights' fees—were mostly in the North. The men of Hitchin Manor can only have heard a far-off rumour of their lords' adventures, and felt only the backwash of their varying fortunes. Some little pride they must have had in Bernard de Baliol (149. *a*), who succeeded his uncle Guy about 1112, for the whole of England rang with his exploits at the Battle of the Standard, 1138, and his desperate unavailing stand with Stephen at the Battle of Lincoln, 1142. It was not so bad, after all, to do ploughing and reaping and bodyguard service for such a man as that; or to help him when he was short of money to pay his

Scutage, Danegeld and other dues. Hitchin meant something for Baliol, too, for he chose out of all the churches in his gift to be buried in the preceptory of his Knight Templars here at Dinsley, and, though that has long since gone to rack and ruin, his effigy, brought for sanctuary to St. Mary's church, is with us to this day (155. 76). Such a man also was Bernard, his son, who succeeded him in 1167 (155. 80–95): 'a man noble and magnanimous,' the tamer of William the Lion, and the maker of that battle-cry which is in itself the epitome of chivalry: 'Let him go back who chooses; but I will go on though no one follow me.' It was another saying of his that 'whoever has not boldness ought not to have honour or anything that belongs to it'; but the Hitchin tenants must have regretted the boldness which led him to withhold from Henry II an account of the lands that he held in chief. By way of punishment the manor was seized into the King's hands, and so continued for three years. Eustace de Baliol, who became lord of Hitchin in 1194, unlike his father, was a man of peace (155. 96–99). He was always behind with his payments for Scutage, and in 1199 was fined 200 marks of silver for refusing to go on military service oversea. It is curious how moneyless were these lords of vast domains. It took over ten years to pay this fine, and another six years to pay the £100 which the King demanded before he would license Baliol's marriage with Pernell, the widow of Robert Fitz-Piers (155. 97). The rents of Hitchin all went to make peace with the King in Eustace de Baliol's day. Hugh (155. 100–117), who inherited in 1212, was constantly in straits for money, in spite of his turning shipowner and merchant-adventurer; but he knew how to fend for himself better than the man of peace, his father. One finds him borrowing £200 of King John in Poitou and raising another 120 marks by mortgaging his manor of Hicche to Benedict the Jew (v), whereof the same Benedict holds the deed' (93). He also raised money by deeds that were not title-deeds, by practices sharper than Benedict ever knew. Matthew Paris in his *Chronicle* sets him down as *consiliarius iniquissimus*, one of the King's most wicked advisers, 'who, desiring to please the King in all things, gave advice not according to reason but to his pleasure. During the last war (that between John and his barons) he found it very pleasant to

v. A well-known usurer who in 1171 had been fined £20 for taking certain sacred vestments in pawn.

live by plunder; and even when peace was made, and all men were called upon to enjoy the fruits of peace, he could not restrain his prurient hands from their wonted course of plunder' (148. 2. 533; 148. 3. 33).

As soon as he came to the throne, Henry III took vigorous steps to check this lawlessness. In 1216 he called upon Baliol to surrender Whorlton Castle, which King John had taken away from the great Yorkshire family of Meynell and bestowed upon Baliol eight months before. As Baliol refused to do anything of the kind and dropped his portcullis in the face of the sheriff whenever he came near, the King took the defenceless manor of Hitchin instead as a pledge, and handed it over to Stephen Langton, 'until Hugh de Baliol shall render the land of Robert de Mesnill as we have often ordered' (95). When these troubles had blown over and Hitchin had been redeemed, Baliol sought to make amends to the tenants whom he had betrayed first of all into the hands of a Jew and then into those of an Archbishop. In 1221, with the gift of a richly caparisoned palfrey, he coaxed the King to grant Hitchin a fair to be held on the vigil and day of St. Andrew in every year (96). On his own account, also, he seems to have felt some anxiety, more especially over the salvation of his soul, and thought it might be good business to bribe the Abbot of St. Albans to intercede for him at the throne of grace by the grant 'in free and perpetual alms of all that land which Roger Campion held of my father in Hiche under Langley wood' (94). Twenty-one witnesses were called in to marvel at this munificent donation. The land in question was worth five shillings a year, but apparently Hugh, who had been a merchant and was still inclined to be a sinner, did not rate his soul at more.

V

John, the eldest of six sons (155. 118–24), inherited the estates with their encumbrances in 1228, and for some years there was the accustomed confusion: debts, threats, sureties, sheriffs and distraints. About the year 1233, however, all these embarrassments vanished, for, with the inspiration that sometimes visits those who are hopelessly in debt, John de Baliol found himself hopefully in love with one of the greatest heiresses in Europe, Devorgoil, daughter of Alan, Lord of Gal-

loway, who was lineally descended from David I, King of Scotland. Though Alan died without a son, it was doubtful for a time if his daughter would inherit, for, according to the spirited account given under the year 1232 in the *Chronicle of Lanercost*, ' his savage clan, always ready for mischief and wishing to shake off their subjection to the King of the Scots, and scorning girls, made to themselves Lord and almost King the illegitimate son of Alan, Thomas by name. They also leagued themselves with a certain scoundrel called Gilleroth, and, sallying from their boundaries, laid waste with fire and sword the surrounding country belonging to the King and his Barons and Knights. The King, therefore, mustered an army and attacked them. He made an infinite slaughter of the caitiffs, and took the chief of the conspiracy prisoner. Then he restored the land in peace and quiet to the daughters of Alan, the lawful heirs. Later, the Lord John Baliol married Devorgoil, the eldest of the sisters, and the aforesaid misbegotten Thomas was handed over to his custody and was confined up to an extreme old age in the keep of Bernard's Castle ' (148. 3. 364–5).

This sudden accession of wealth saved Baliol out of all his troubles, though some of them had threatened to be serious. In 1255 he was deprived of his high office as Regent of Scotland and Guardian of the infant King and Queen, on charges of high treason and ill-treatment of the Queen. The rage of Henry III of England was kindled against him, but ' John de Baliol,' says Matthew Paris, ' a rich and powerful knight, cautiously made peace with his King by supplying him, in his necessity with money of which he possessed abundance, (155. 120). His next trouble was with the Church. Again we may let the *Chronicle of Lanercost* take up the tale : ' In the year 1260 the Lord Sir Walter de Kirkham, Bishop of Durham, departed this life full of days, a man gentle and pure ; in person little, but in mind very large and devout, who loved to survey not the woods but the psalms. He was of such authority in the exercise of his office that he was honoured and feared by the mightiest, and he sternly checked those that rebelled against the Church. Thus it happened that a baron of his diocese, a man well renowned in the whole of England, had gotten himself exceedingly drunk with beer, quite contrary to the fair esteem beseeming his rank, and had done other evil disrespectful to the Church. When he heard of the audacity, the pious pastor admonished him that

JOHN DE BALIOL, LORD OF HITCHIN AND FATHER OF JOHN DE BALIOL, KING OF SCOTLAND

From an engraving by William Robins of the painting by W. Sonmans, 1670 in the Bodleian Library. An Oxford blacksmith is said to have served as model for this portrait. See *Oxoniana*, iii, 15

he should make amends; but, inasmuch as pride chooses rather to be confounded than corrected, he added scorn to effrontery. But the Bishop, strengthening his heart, so sagaciously brought back his erring son to his bosom that with much ceremony at the entrance of Durham Cathedral, and before the eyes of all the people, he suffered whipping at the hand of the Bishop, and assigned a sum of money by way of fixed maintenance to be continued for ever to scholars studying at Oxford.' Such was the origin of Baliol College, Oxford (155. 121–2).

His last quarrel was with his fellow Barons, for, like his father and all his race, he was a King's man. As Sheriff of Cumberland, 1249–55, Governor of Carlisle Castle, 1255, Custodian of the Honour of Peverel, 1261, Keeper of Nottingham Castle, 1262, Ambassador with Simon de Montfort and Richard de Clare to King Louis IX, 1259, he had shown himself diligent and staunch in the interests of the Crown. In 1263 he joined the great levy of Royalists at Oxford, along with Richard, King of the Romans, Prince Edward, William de Valence, Robert Bruce, Marmion, Percy, Mortimer and other warlike and loyal spirits. The Barons, who were in rebellion, thereupon seized Baliol's manors, including the manor of Hitchin, and in the following year he himself was taken prisoner with the King at the Battle of Lewes. Through the mediation of Simon de Montfort, his sometime friend, he was set free on an exchange of prisoners; but he does not seem to have tried the fortune of war again at Evesham, that 'great battle in the west, where the hope of the people was slain.' Four years later John de Baliol himself was dead (149. *d*).

VI

It will not be amiss to pause for a moment and glance through the inquisitions (97 & 98) upon the death of this John de Baliol in 1269, and upon that of his widow, Devorgoil (vi) in 1290. The two together throw considerable light upon the changes that were taking place within the manor, more especially in the commutation of services into money. Twelve 'true and lawful men of the bailiwick' report to the King in 1269 that the manor

vi. The D.N.B. and some other authorities refer to her as *Devorguila*. The variations are endless. The spelling of her name both in her lifetime and afterwards gave rise to infinite trouble. The Hitchin jurors in 1275 could get no nearer than *Therverwyl*.

'contains 680 acres of arable, worth 17 marks and 2d. by the year, the worth of the acre being 4d., 40 acres and one rood of meadow, worth 6 marks and 6d., the worth of the acre being 2s., 18 acres of pasture, worth 9s. by the year, the worth of the acre being 6d., and 40 acres of woodland, but they are destroyed by the war.' Besides these there belong to the manor a garden valued at 2s. by the year and three corn mills, one malt mill and one fulling mill worth altogether 18 marks and 16s. after deduction of tithe. The jurors do not refer to any profits of the fair, nor to the assize of bread and ale which the Baliols had assumed the right to hold since the early part of the century. The tolls of the market are estimated at 10 marks, which shows that it was well attended. When Devorgoil died twenty-two years later, the jurors were careful to add to the foregoing possessions an oven worth £5, 13 capons worth 1½d. each, five cocks and 11 hens worth 1d. each, and 120 eggs valued at 4d. To turn now to the tenants and their services, we find that in 1269 one section of them is doing a certain amount of ploughing and paying a sum of £7 5s., which suggests a partial commutation. Another group of villeins in the manor is still discharging the full complement of week-works, boon-days and carryings as in the former times. By 1290 the former class had commuted everything, and the latter, now twenty-four in number, does no more than the carrying service and two works a week. Another interesting feature of John de Baliol's inquisition is the reference, not met with before, to a yearly rent of 8½ marks from 'the farm of the borough,' with a further receipt from its boon-days of 10s. 6d. It has been suggested as an explanation that Hitchin was Ancient Demesne, and that villein socmen, who were economically superior to ordinary villeins, had attempted to hold of the lord at farm. To the ordinary eye, however, it does look as though the wool-staplers and traders of the town had gained some degree of burghal privilege (vii); a view that is supported by the style of the manor court itself as of Hitchin, Portman and Foreign. By 1290, however, 'the farm of the borough' has disappeared, apparently for ever. At the same time the quantity of demesne arable has increased. Here, then, is a mystery of no mean consequence to Hitchin as a town. How was this newly attained

vii. Professor Sir Paul Vinogradoff writes: 'Probably a fixed *firma burgi*. See Thomas Madox, *Firma burgi*, or an historical essay concerning the cities and boroughs of England. 1726.'

dignity lost in the course of those twenty years? What sudden enmity arose between the thriving artisans and the tillers of the soil? Why were these rising ambitions of trade and industry swallowed up by the land? A mystery it remains (viii). We have searched high and low in anxious hope to light upon some charter that shall restore what we have lost. We have found stray references to Hitchin as a 'borough,' and many acknowledgments of burgage tenure as far on as 1580. But up till now we have not established the right of the town to be held by burgesses, nor have we discovered in the improving condition of its citizens any privileges of the kind, except such as might be enjoyed by them as men of a manor.

The long widowhood of Devorgoil was passed in works of piety and 'pure endeavour to complete her dear lord's will.' 'She was a woman,' says the *Chronicle of Lanercost*, 'largely endowed with money and lands both in England and Scotland; but she had a much richer endowment in the nobility of her heart' (155. 126). For many years she laboured to accomplish the plan which Baliol had conceived for his Oxford college, and ordained statutes for that purpose in 1282. But in her own day she was more famous for the tender and devout regard which she cherished for her late lord's memory. His heart, 'embalmed with sweet-smelling spices and laid in its coffer of ivory, was ever by her side. And always when she went to meat she had the coffer set at the table, and did reverence to it as though he were present' (155. 129). Everyone knows the story of Sweet-Heart Abbey, which Devorgoil founded in 1275:—

'Thither day by day she wended,
On that same spot knelt and prayed;
There at last when all was ended
With the heart she loved was laid.

'In that place of ivied ruin
She hath taken since the close
Of her life of full well-doing
Six long centuries of repose.

viii. Professor Hamilton Thompson writes: 'I should say that the real reason was inability to perform the public duties for which the borough might be held responsible. Leeds is a case in point, where the charter granted by Maurice Paynell in 1207 had only a temporary effect, and the town appears to have relapsed quickly into the condition of a *villa mercatoria*. The decay of early boroughs is dealt with very clearly in Tait's introduction to *British Borough Charters, 1216–1307*.'

'Meek one! who 'mid proud men violent
A pure builder unreproved
Loved and laboured for the silent
Kingdom that shall ne'er be moved' (ix).

There were to be many long journeys to Hitchin and Kempston, her manors in the south, before 'this noble dame passed from the world full of years and was buried at Doux Cœur.' But it is only of troublesome affairs that the records speak (155. 188–91). Twice had the Sheriff of Hertford 'commanded the said Devorgoil to come'; to show 'by what warrant she claims to have view of frankpledge, amends of the assize of bread and ale broken, market, warren, gallows, pillory and tumbrel, in respect of the manor of Hicche, which things pertain to the dignity of the lord the King.' Twice Devorgoil defaulted; 'did not come to the Assizes on the first day—therefore in mercy. And the twelve jurors of Hitchin concealed the aforesaid Devorgoil. Therefore they are in mercy.' At last in 1278 we read 'And Devorgoil comes.' The manor, 'to which the said liberties pertain,' is then vouched to be Ancient Demesne, held by the lady in dower of the inheritance of John de Baliol by the service of one and a half knights' fees worth £40 a year. Apparently the right to gallows, pillory, tumbrel and the rest is successfully asserted, but, though the Lady Baliol is tenacious of her rights, she is tenderness itself in the exercise of them. She claims the right of gallows, but somehow or other she lets all her prisoners escape (x). 'The jurors present that Christiane de Roweriale was taken with two lambs stolen of the worth of 15d., and she was imprisoned at Hitchin in the custody of Devorgoil and escaped from her custody.' Likewise John de Tykhell, 'who by night killed Cecilia his wife in her own house in Berton in the parish of Hitchin, and immediately after the fact was taken and imprisoned in the custody of Devorgoil, and he escaped from that prison. Therefore for judgement concerning the escape against the said Devorgoil.' One is glad to see that Devorgoil's own bailiff, who had taken advantage of her long absence, was brought to book and not allowed to escape.

ix. From the version by Principal John Campbell Shairp of Andrew de Wyntoun's ballad in the *Cronykle of Scotland* (1426).

x. 'No sentimental reasons,' notes Sir Paul Vinogradoff; 'such escapes were frequent everywhere, and were carefully noticed only because they were occasions for fines.'

So many bailiffs of this period earned their evil reputation as 'flayers of rustics' (*excoriator rusticorum*) and cynically and successfully defended themselves on the plea that 'the churl like the willow sprouted the better for being cropped.' No such defence would answer before the Lady Devorgoil: 1278, 'The jurors say that John Balle, sub-bailiff, sold to the men of his bailiwick a gallon of his ale for 1d. which was not worth ½d.; and Thomas his man extorted sheaves at harvestide from the villeins, and made them carry with their carts against the will of the poor. That John being present cannot deny the same. Therefore he is in custody.'

VII

Devorgoil died in 1290 at her manor house at Kempston, having seen two of her sons, Hugh and Alexander, succeed to her husband's estates and predecease her without issue. It was to John de Baliol, her youngest son, therefore, that her own possessions passed, and along with them that fatal blood gift—the presumptive heirship of the Crown of Scotland—which within two years exalted the Lord of Hitchin Manor to be the Lord and King of Scotland, and four years afterwards abased him to the dust (155. 136–91). It was the fate of the last Baliol lord to die discrowned and in exile in that land of Picardy whence his ancestor, Guy de Baliol, had set forth with William upon the conquest of England.

In 1296, upon Baliol's renunciation of the fealty and homage he had sworn to Edward I, the manor of Hitchin was forfeited to the Crown (79. 3. 8). Five years later an annual sum of £100 out of the manor and eight bucks out of the King's forest were granted to Roger L'Estrange (99), who had done notable service in his day as steward of the King's household, slayer (though others claimed that honour) of Llewelyn, Prince of Wales, 1282, and envoy to Nicholas IV, 1292, to obtain Papal recognition of the King's right to be overlord of Scotland. As Edward I at the time of making the grant was setting out to war with Scotland, he ordered the stay-at-home Barons to see the money paid, 'which they omitted to do, at which the King marvels" (99). Upon L'Estrange's death in 1311, the manor was settled in tailmale upon one Robert de Kendale (100), Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports, who

afterwards played no mean part in the wars with Robert Bruce. In 1317 he seems to have been engaged in a miniature war with his tenants, for he charges a number of them with 'seizing and taking away eight carts and twenty-eight horses of his yoked to them, and assaulting his bailiff and men' (102). In his family the manor remained until the failure of male issue in 1375, when King Edward III was beguiled by his mistress, Alice Perrers, to make her a present of it for her life (108). When all her worldly possessions were forfeited for 'extortionate and illegal acts' by the Good Parliament of 1376, and she was banished from the realm, an inquisition was taken at 'Hycchyn,' which gives a minute and picturesque account of the working of the manor. This time the fair is not forgotten; its tolls are said to be worth two marks by the year. The rents of assize of the free tenants are estimated at £20; the ploughing of four customary tenants, in all 24 acres, is put at 8s. There are still 93 works (*precaria*) being performed and 16 *cariagia* with one horse and cart. The jurors go on to describe the lady's crops, her farm stock and her implements. It is the month of February, but she has, set up in cocks, 20 quarters of wheat, 5 quarters of flax, 160 quarters of barley and drage (a mixture of barley and oats), and 12 quarters of oats. The value of this corn varies from 2s. to 3s. the quarter. In the account of farm stock the jurors number 3 cart-horses worth 20s. each, 6 oxen worth 12s. each, 1 bull and 29 cows worth 7s. each, 1 cock with 12 hens worth 1½d. each, 2 sheep of two years old worth 2d. each. The implements included 2 ploughs with their wooden harness and coulters, an old broken cart, 2 sieves, 1 fork for dung, 1 mattock, 30 hurdles old and weak, 1 sack, 1 winnowing fan, 1 cistern made of oak-timber and lead, 4 poplar tables, 1 *cilicium* (xi), 1 bushel measure bound with iron, 1 basket of withes for seed, and 2 old oak scales (108).

At this point it may be convenient to note some of the leases and rent charges which had for some years been created out of

xi. When I asked an official in the Record Office what this word might mean, he very properly and promptly said 'a hair-shirt.' When I told him whose property the *cilicium* was—a hair-shirt for Alice Perrers, the King's mistress—he broke into one of the most unofficial bursts of laughter that have ever shaken the solemnity of that place. The word was probably misspelt and has some connection with *siliqua*, the name of a small weight or measure, especially as it is a bushel measure that follows in the catalogue of farm tackle.

the manor in favour of those whom the King delighted to honour, or those other by no means honourable people to whom the King was indebted. As an example of the latter class, one may cite Geoffrey de la Lee, a moneylender to whom the King had assigned the property of the Knights Templars in these parts after the dissolution of the Order in 1312. As some of the lands lay in Hitchin, some at Temple Dinsley and some at Baldock, it was proposed to hold a view of Frankpledge at the place last named. The tenants, however, were suspicious, for they had yet to meet an Israelite in whom there was no guile. The moment the tradespeople were ordered by the new bailiff to produce their weights and measures a tumult arose. The bailiff's standard weights and measures were 'forcibly carried off' and smashed to atoms. The new collector of tolls was assaulted and battered and maimed, and his goods to the value of £10 parted amongst his persecutors, who then proceeded to commit other 'orible and abomynable dedis' (101).

Of those whom the King delighted to honour out of the rents and issues of this lordship one might compile a very lengthy list, and it is pleasing to think that the town was brought into touch with many noteworthy as well as some notorious people in this way. In 1368 King Edward III rewarded Edmund de Chesthunte, one of his falconers, with 'the lands late of Edward Leget in Hicchen which are in the King's hands on account of a felony which he is said to have done in killing his mother' (106). In 1375 a grant is made 'of our especial grace to the venerable father William of Wykeham,' who was then entreating alms for the building of his colleges (107). In 1380 Sir Hugh Segrave, who had been Chamberlain to the Black Prince, was pensioned off with '100 marks out of the king's manor of Hecchen.' The grant to him is especially interesting, as it mentions every field by its name and is careful not to overlook such details as 'the park called Pinfold, the pond with the fish and the trees about it, the dovecote with the doves thereof' (108. *a*). After 1387 these rent-charges ceased for a time, for in that year King Richard II granted the manor to Edmund de Langley of this county, who was made Duke of York for his services in Spain, France and Scotland (109). He died in 1402, leaving as his son and heir Edward, Earl of Rutland (110), who came to an unhappy end at Agincourt; for, 'desiring of King Henry that he might have the forward of the battle that

day, which granted, he, a fat man, through much heat and thronging was trampled upon and smothered to death.' As he died without issue, the manor descended to his nephew Richard, the third and the greatest of the Dukes of York, who was slain at Wakefield in 1460. It was out of loyalty to this lord that the men of Hitchin in 1453 conspired against the life of their supreme lord, the King, and waged a little war of their own within the Wars of the Roses. According to the contemporary account (P.R.O. K.B. 9/40) 'John Sturgeon, yeoman, John Monke, labourer, John Innocent, labourer, John Love, husbandman, John Dunstaple, cordwayner, John Fitzwater, tylemaker, John Carter, miller,' and thirty-eight more Hitchin men whose names and occupations are given, 'and many other false traitors, rebels and enemies unknown of the most Christian Prince Henry, King of England, on February 20th, the 30th year of the reign of the said Lord, at Hichyn and elsewhere within the county of Hertford falsely and traitorously imagined, circumvented, compassed and conspired the death and destruction of the said King and in divers unlawful conventicles assembled themselves together then and there and proposed and willed to depose (*deprimere*) the aforesaid King from his royal power and rule, and in order to fulfill that their false and wicked intent the said John Sturgeon and other false traitors, against their due allegiance, to the number of 200 men, by force and arms, *viz.* with swords, sticks, bows, arrows, defensive doublets, hauberks, poleaxes, iron caps, cuirasses, long beaks (*rostris*) and other defensive arms, armed and in warlike manner arrayed to strengthen and help divers other traitors and enemies of the said King then assembled within the county of Kent and waging war in an open field near Dartford and greatly threatening the said King there in war, rose in insurrection at Hichyn and traitorously levied war against the said King, their supreme lord, and supported and strengthened with all their strength the Duke of York and Earl of Devon in finally fulfilling their wicked intentions for the deposition and final destruction of the said King and the primacy of his Crown and regalia and against their allegiance.'

It seems that this insurrection failed, for, 'on the Monday after the feast of St. Edward King and Confessor' the following year, 'John Prescot, Richard Byngham, Robert Danvers and other justices,' sat in a special assize at Hitchin to bring these rebels to judgment. Though the jury found a true bill, it is

not known what punishment was meted out to the men of Hitchin. Six years later, 1459, however, one finds some of them petitioning for a pardon in respect of all treasons and other offences.'

In 1460 the Lord of Hitchin Manor, whom his tenants at such risk and loss to themselves had 'strengthened and supported,' was himself slain at the Battle of Wakefield. The same year Alexander Dover, the Sergeant of the King's Ewery (xii), was made 'bailiff for his life of Hicchyn and receiver of the rents pertaining thereto, forfeit by the rebellion of Richard, Duke of York' (113); and a few months later a charge was created upon the manor to provide for the keep of 'Thomas Hardgrove, Master of the King's Otter Hunt, and for that of his groom, two greyhounds and ten running dogs' (114). In the following year, Dover's life office as bailiff and Hardgrove's pension came to an abrupt end; for the late Duke's son, Edward, Earl of March, overthrew the King's forces at Mortimer's Cross, made himself king, and restored the manor to his mother, the Duchess Cecily of York (115).

VIII

Now let us slip away from the broils and commotions of these civil wars and see how the tenants of the manor are faring; for about this time, 1471, three courts were held of which by good fortune the rolls have been preserved (117). They are the earliest we possess. Clearly there had been a change for the good since those inquisitions we glanced at in 1269 and 1290 and 1377. The villeins had had their difficulties, of course, like other men. From 1297 to 1314 their corn had not brought them much more than 4s. a quarter after harvest, or 7s. in the dearest months of the year (79. 4. 190). During the famine of 1315 they could have extorted as much as 20s. the quarter, but very few had harvested their crops in that disastrous summer (xiii). Then, too, the stock had proved a disappointment. If the cereals failed, a husbandman might yet win his living out of wool; especially at Hitchin, which had become profitably associated with the Staple of Calais, and had Franks and Flemings

xii. Ewery: an office in the King's household, where they take care of the linen for the King's table, lay the cloth and serve up water in silver ewers after dinner.

xiii. It was hardly possible to get bread for the King himself when he came to St. Albans Abbey at Lawrence-tide that year.

residing in the 'Forreign' and buying up all they could get. As ill-luck would have it, however, a plague of murrain descended upon the country in 1274 and stayed to blight the farmers' prospects for close on thirty years (79. 4. 191). They were just recovering from that when a worse plague appeared, which attacked not their sheep and cattle but themselves. If one may take the subsidy rolls before and after 1349 for a guide, it looks as though Hitchin lost quite a third of its people by the Black Death. For four centuries one of its streets bore the grim name of Dead Street as a sign and testimony of this dreadful visitation; and it has always been said that in that quarter of the town not a single person survived.

Once again the cost of food and labour rose by leaps and bounds, and those of the tenants who had escaped with their lives must have exulted at the thought of what a harvest they would reap. Corn was fetching anything up to 30s. a quarter in Hitchin Market, and where hirelings had been getting only 6d. an acre for ploughing, the sudden scarcity of labour made it possible for them to demand four times the amount. For a couple of years, perhaps, the golden harvest was reaped, and then the Statute of Labourers, 1351, with its rigid and niggardly scale, brought this delightful power of bargaining (or extortion as the masters termed it) to an untimely end. Whatever may have happened elsewhere, in the half-hundred of Hitchin the statute was rigorously enforced, for Edward de Kendale, Lord of the Manor, was one of the eight justices of the county of Hertford appointed 'to keep the statute' (104), and his vigilance in this respect is sufficiently shown by the return of fines. The offenders were most numerous, of course, amongst the farm labourers and in the hamlets and villages around; but even in the town the penalties came to something like £150 of our money (105).

It is in the hundred years following these calamities and repressions that one traces a steady improvement in the lot of the manor tenants. The use of the word 'tenant' itself is significant; one does not hear so continually of bondmen and villeins. For, 'having shaken off the fetters of their bondage,' as Coke puts it, 'they were presently freed of their opprobrious names and had other gentler styles and titles conferred upon them, e.g. Tenants by Custom of the Manor.' You begin to find them paying a shilling or two *pro rotulo habendo*, or for

leave to search the rolls and verify their titles (79. 4. 185). A sense of security, almost of independence, is manifest for the first time. They were becoming conscious, as Capgrave said, that they were sprung ' of no wrecchid nacion, ne of no servage, but of peple gentil, freemanly and large ' (i.e. open-handed). As you browse over these manor rolls, you cannot but admire the hardy, tenacious spirit of our English people ; obtaining after centuries of struggle the substitution of rent for abject servitude ; by patience, endurance or open revolt slowly beating down the oppression of those lords of whom it was said ' they do their bondmen great favour when they do them no harm ' ; wresting by infinitely small degrees more certainty of tenure, and power to marry, to travel and to leave their goods by will ; so becoming at last masters in their own house and administering through the Court Leet the government of the township in which they lived. It has been rightly said that the history of England is the history of the enfranchisement of these artificers and tillers of the soil, these humble ' men of the manor,' on whose slowly straightening backs our civilization is still uneasily poised (xiv).

At Hitchin the tenants were fortunate in being attached to a manor where the fine was certain and mercifully small—for the freeholder one year's quit rent, and for the copyholder only half. No heriot to pay, and no licence needed for leasing up to a three years' term. Still more fortunate were they in holding direct of the King. If they compared their lot with their neighbours at Wymondley and Willian, they must have given heartfelt thanks that they were not, as other men, at the mercy of unjust, extortionate lordlings like the Argentines and Punchardons, who, if one may borrow a general description from *Bracton* and *Fleta*, ' upon the least occasion, sometimes without any colour of reason, only upon discontentment and malice, sometimes again upon some sudden fantastic humour only to make evident to the world the height of their power and authority, would expel out of house and home their poor copyholders, leaving them helpless and remediless.' There was a time at Hitchin, too, when they knew what it meant to be ' oustable at the lord's pleasure.' They may have been cruelly squeezed by Benedict the Jew, and have learnt by bitter experience that

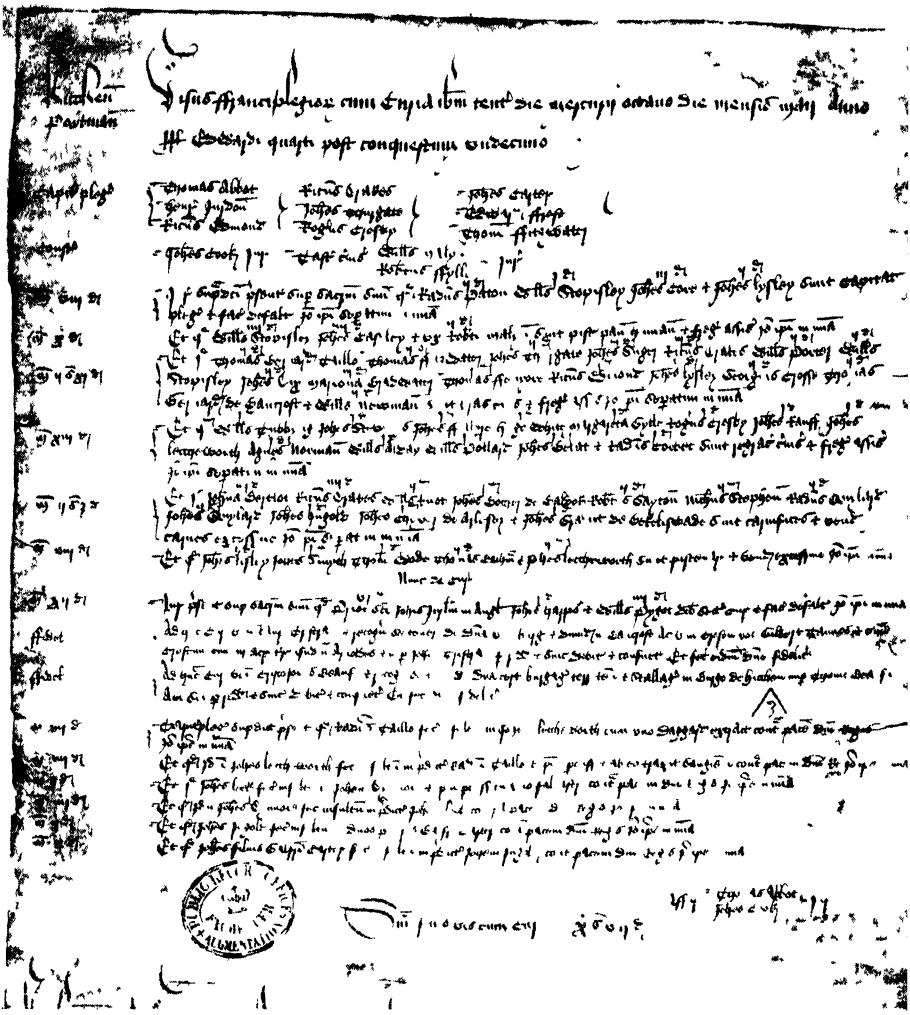
xiv. ' This is misleading,' observed Sir Paul Vinogradoff, in revising this chapter ; ' to some extent English rustics were descended from ceorls *who had been free.*'

the little finger of Alice Perrers was thicker than the loins of the King. But on the whole they had been well and not evilly entreated. That was due in a measure to the good fortune of their insignificance. If the King wished to show 'the height of *his* power and authority,' it was to his presumptuous Barons or to the King of France, not to them. If he proposed to come down upon the country like a plague of locusts eating up the land, well, Hitchin was but one of many royal manors. It could afford to take its turn with the rest; and there was always the faint chance that some crumbs of favour might be picked up afterwards beneath the royal table, e.g. in 1467, when the tenants of the Ancient Demesne of the Crown were confirmed in their right to 'carry their merchandise, goods and chattels freely through the realm of England without prest of toll (xv), stallage, cheminage, murage, pavage, pontage, passage, quayage, lastage, carriage and terrage in accordance with ancient custom.' Furthermore, the King, having other things to do, was not tempted to try his hand at farming. Round about Hitchin so much of the waste and common land was being grabbed by 'greedy and gripple' lords and added to demesne; but here the demesne arable hardly varied by an acre in extent, 79. 4. 198; and to this day the parish has never been 'swept over by the ruthless broom of an Enclosure Act.'

IX

After this preamble, we may take up the rolls of 1471, written upon skins of parchment, which cost the scrivener four pence, as he himself notes at the end (117). What strikes one immediately is that there are separate views of Frankpledge being held for Hitchin Portman and Hitchin Foreign; at each court the business is much the same, but the tenants of the Portman have no dealings with the tenants of the Foreign, and separate officers are sworn: one set for the Portman or town proper, and another set for each district of the Foreign or outlying parts of the manor. 'The order of court-keeping' is observed just as strictly by the barbarians in the Foreign as by the enlightened citizens in the

xv. 'Tenants in Ancient Demesne,' says Coke, 'pay no toll for the produce of their land because at the beginning of their tenure they applied themselves to the manurance and husbandry of the King's demesnes' (*Institutes*, 2nd part, p. 221).



MEMBRANE FROM A COURT ROLL OF HITCHIN MANOR DATED 1471

The names of Thomas Abbot and John Cook can be discerned at the foot of the roll

town. First of all the ' essoins of suitors ' are considered—that is to say, the excuses of those tenants who, ' upon any just cause such as sickness or impassable roads or broken bridges or imprisonment by enemies,' are unable to attend the court. Then the several officers are sworn : the pledgemen—there are twelve for the town, who are to be answerable for its good behaviour ; two constables, who are ' to make good and faithful presentments of all blood-sheds, out-cryes, riots, debates, affrayes and rescues ' within their office ; two tasters of ale, who ' are to have diligent regard to all brewers and tiplers that they make good and wholesome ale for man's body (xvi), and that they do not sell any before it hath been tasted, and then to be sold according to the prices limited by the Justices of Peace ' ; the hayward or greve, to look after the common herd and present all breaches of the pound ; the shepherd, who according to *Fleta* has to ' provide himself with a good barkable dog (*de bono cane latrabili*) and lie nightly with his flock ' ; and the affeerers, who, ' without sparing any for love, fear or affection,' are to fix the penalties for those manorial offences not prescribed by statute, ' according to the quality of the same.' Before these officials are sworn in, the tenants have an opportunity to lodge complaints against those who served in the preceding year. In the Court of Portman it is presented that Thomas Power has been the taster of ale and has performed his office badly. He is fined one penny and no one urges his reappointment. Those who have broken the several assizes are then ' in mercy ' : two bakers of human bread who are deficient in weight ; twelve brewers of bad ale and twenty regrators (i.e. profiteers) of ale ; nine butchers and six common fishmongers who ' sold flesh and fish at excessive prices.' The fines are trifling, and as the same offenders and the same penalties are entered in court after court, it looks as though immunity from trade regulations could be purchased on easy terms. There are no such ' penalties to fit the crime ' here as in other towns, where a baker would have his light-weight loaf tied about his neck and

xvi. It has been suggested to me by Mr. J. E. Little, of Hitchin, that in their origin these ale-tastings may have been imposed not so much for the protection of the manor tenants as for that of the lord. In Saxon times, as Seebohm points out in his *English Village Community*, p. 140, the geburs or villeins frequently rendered part of their gafol or tribute in ale. There was honey-gafol, mete-gafol and ale-gafol. The office of ale-taster may therefore have been created to keep the villein's brew up to the mark, lest the lord should be receiving ' swipes ' instead of XXX.

be whipped round and round the market square; or a brewer be forced to swallow a gallon of his foul brew and have the remainder poured over his head (117).

The next business of the court is to inquire into nuisances, and on this head it is presented *inter alia* that William Aldey and John Goffe are glove-makers, and are in the habit of throwing the scrapings of skins of cattle into the stream at night. Again, 'William Deighere is a tanner, and with the things arising from his art he discolours the water of the lady [i.e. the river Hiz] to her damage.' Offences against law and order are next considered. It is presented that 'John Crouch is of the age of twelve years and upwards, and has resided within the precinct of this view for one year, and yet is out of the tithing of the Lord the King. Therefore he is in mercy, and is ordered to put himself on the tithing at the next court.' Then follow several charges of assault and battery, amongst them one against John Leek for having attacked John Dymore with a scythe, and another against Ralph Taillor for having wounded John Letchworth with a dagger. Letchworth himself is held to be in mercy 'for having struck back at the said Ralph so as to draw blood' (117).

X

After these violent men have been punished with the fine of a penny or two, the court settles down to the ordinary business of the manor: surrenders and admissions, encroachments, breaches of custom, regulations of common, and rules for the proper cultivation of the strips in the open fields. We must dwell on these humdrum, work a day affairs for a moment, because it is by them—as any student soon discovers—that the life of the manor is most vividly revealed. It is presented, for example, that John Bertlott, 'languishing *in extremis*,' surrendered the close called Lesser Conigrees out of court to Joan, the wife of John Bertlott. Joan is accordingly admitted at this court, not for life but for the term of forty years, which has become a settled custom of the manor, and so continues to this day. Again, it is presented that John Cooke has 'encroached a parcel of land of the highway called "Pyrton way" with his plough'; that William Shepherd has 'ploughed up a certain balk called "Boles-banke" and is ordered to replace it before the next court';

that John Megre ' has removed the mere stone or boundary-stake between his land and that of Thomas Beaufu ' ; that Lawrence Shepherd has not cleaned out his ditch abutting on ' Amsey way ' ; that the Master and College of Pleçy have ' allowed their hedge to grow out upon the highway at Grubbes Lane to the width of ten feet ' ; that Pernell Roper ' has neglected to repair a style at Waltonsworth called Nineacre style ' ; that John Robyn ' has till the feast of All Saints to rebuild a house on his customary tenement instead of the house there decayed to the ground under pain of forfeiting his estate in the same ' ; and that John Coke and Agnes, his wife, ' are common robbers, stealing the sheaves of divers neighbours in the autumn time ' (117).

To come now to the Commons, ' it is ordained by the assent of the Lady's Council and her tenants that from the end of August to the end of All Saints no one shall fold any sheep on the land lying from Starlings Bridge by the holme to Purwell, and thence to Bradybrigge, and thence to Hollane, and thence by le Redye to Poltysbroke under pain of 6s. 8d., a moiety of which is to be paid to the Lady of this manor, and the other moiety to the Church of Hitchin.' The reason for this temporary restriction may be that the court had decided upon a ' hitching ' of some of those fields—that is to say, the reservation of them during the time in which they were commonable by ancient custom in order that turnips, vetches or beans might be grown instead. Finally, it is decreed that ' no one shall enter the sown lands in autumn to gather corn or ears with rakes or with their hands if they are able to earn 2d. a day, under pain for each one breaking this ordinance of 3s. 4d. And that those who are not able to earn 2d. a day shall not enter or pass through the sown lands till the stooks or sheaves have been cleared for the space of four acres, and if they be boys or persons under age or servants who are not able to pay, then their masters who have their persons in governance shall answer to the lady for the penalty. And further, that no one shall pass through or keep their sheep in the fields sown with wheat and barley near the stooks and sheaves till the tithe sheaves are fully carried off under penalty of 6s. 8d.' (xvii).

xvii. A significant provision. It suggests that whereas in earlier times, under the laws of King Ethelred (A.D. 968–1016) every tenth strip had been set aside for the Church in ploughing, by the fifteenth century, if not long

So ends the Court, and there is only the tidying up to do. The Steward counts up what he has received for quit-rents and fines, makes a note of his expenses, and prepares a rough draft of the minutes for the scrivener. As an after-thought he tells him to include the bailiff's account also for repairs to the Lady's Mills. As these particulars are rarely met with, we will include them, too: 'First: Paid for two millstones for the Mill called "Porte Mylle," 33s. 4d., and for one "brasse" and one "gogeon" bought for the said mill, 3d. And paid for boards for the water-wheel and the cog-wheel of the mill called "Shotlyng Mylle" and keys for locking the said boards, and two "styroppys" of iron bought for the said mill, 2s. And paid for painting the walls of the said mill, 12d. And for stubbing up and carriage of two waggon-loads of wood to serve for restoring the flood-gates, 8d. And the pay of divers workmen brought to restore the said floodgates, 8d. And the pay of divers workmen brought to restore the dam at the "Maltmylle," 12d. And for one iron hoop and two bynnes (binders) bought for the "Extre" (axle-tree) of the said mill, 8d. And in keys bought for the same use, 2d. Sum 43s. 3d.' (117).

No mention is made in this account of Charlton Mill, but in previous accounts its ruinous condition is deplored. The cog-wheels there had a strange experience once; for we read in the Assize Rolls as far back as 1279 that 'John le Saretur went to turn the wheel of the mill of Reginall de Hiche when the wheels moved and drew him between the cogs, whereof he died. Price of the wheel 16s. 8d., for which the sheriff answers. The hamlet of Charlton in mercy' (Assize Rolls 323, *m.* 47. *d.*).

XI

Cecily, Duchess of York, the lady of the manor mentioned in these rolls of 1471, died in 1495, having lived to see two of her sons sit on the throne of England as Edward IV and Richard III. Upon her death the manor came into the King's hands once again, and was granted by Henry VII to his Queen, Elizabeth, who held it until her death in 1503. Henry VIII

before, the priest had tired of farming his own '*mansa*,' and was taking the tenth sheaf from every tenant's strip. See Seebohm's *English Village Community*, pp. 114–17.

followed his father's precedent, and endowed three of his Queens, Katharine of Aragon (120), Anne Boleyn (123) and Jane Seymour (50. 2. 39) in turn with the rents and profits of the manor. From such evidence as exists, it would appear that these profits were not what they had been. What with the decline in population, the ups and downs of the wool trade, and the general unsettlement caused by the Wars of the Roses, the Hitchin Market had fallen on evil days. In 1527, when Queen Katharine's lands were surveyed, the bailiff took only 51s. 4d. in tolls, and thirty years later that figure had shrunk to 20s. On the other hand, there are some new sources of income. The Queen gets 3s. 4d. ' farm of the warren of conies ' (xviii), and 8s. farm of a chalkpit, and several smaller sums on account of favours which the tenants are venturing to ask of the Steward, e.g. ' 2d. from John Hunt that he may make a footbridge over the several [i.e. reserved] water of the lady from the tenement where he lives to the graveyard '—evidently a short cut to the church (122).

Unhappily the court rolls of this period are missing, and it is even doubtful if any courts were held. The Steward was by now advanced in dignity to Gentleman-Steward or Gentleman-Seneschal. He looked upon his appointment as a perquisite, not in the least as an office. Any sort of deputy would serve to collect the dues, more especially the Steward's fees, but for his part he must abide at court or be here, there and everywhere upon the King's service. If Sir John Say, who was appointed in 1459 (112), had had any inclination to come down, the leisure would have been lacking, for he was many years Speaker of the House of Commons (149. *l.*). No sooner was Sir Roger Cotton, Knight of the King's Body, installed (118) than Henry VII dispatched him at the head of an army ' to war with the Irish Rebels.' In 1534 the stewardship was added as an insignificant item to the splendours and emoluments of Lord Mountjoy, one of the Admirable Crichtons of the age, who as scholar had been pupil and patron of Erasmus, as soldier had helped to suppress Perkin Warbeck's rebellion, as diplomatist had attended Henry VIII to the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and as man of affairs had served as Chamberlain to the Queen (149. *i*). One cannot imagine him sitting in a draughty shed in the market square of Hitchin, discussing nuisances and encroachments with the

xviii. In a subsequent account the 3s. 4d. is disputed ' because no conies for many years have been there.'

scum of a country manor. Sir William Coffyn, who followed him as Steward in 1535, was still less to be spared; for over twenty years the King had looked to him to organize his revels, mummeries and jousts of honour, and as Master of the Horse he was kept busy with the Coronation of the successive Queens and the hunting or hawking expeditions of the King. It was well known at Court, too, that 'unless he be given a hawk or a piece of silver he will do no one any pleasure, be it ever so small' (123. *a*). The whole life of Sir Ralph Sadleir, who succeeded him (124), was spent in the council chamber of the State, or driving a hard bargain with what he called 'the rude, inconsistent and beastly nation' of Scotland (149. *k*). When as an old man he resigned his thankless task of keeping Mary Queen of Scots in watch and ward, he was able to live more often at his mansion of Temple Dinsley, but by that time he was too weary to begin another watch and ward over the tenants of Hitchin manor. Thomas Docwra, of Putteridge, who married Sadleir's daughter and succeeded him as Steward, did go out of his way to hold a court occasionally, 1590, 1591, 1592, 1596–97, but there is reason to think it was more for the sake of the dinner than from any sense of duty (126. 201 & 203). The forenoon is whiled away in a show of business. There are fines to take up for 'bloodsheds' and 'waifs and strays.' John Kimpton is amerced 3s. 4d. 'for drawing of blood upon goodman Thorneton'; John Archer has to pay 10s. 'for taking in a stranger to dwell without the consent of the Church Wardens.' Arrangements are to be made 'for setting up a pillory.' William Day has to be presented 'for being a common poulter and buying up Poulterie ware before the market-bell be rung,' Tobias Billeter for 'building a pigeon-house' (xix), Roger Wallis 'for putting his horses and geldings in the fields before the harvest be all home' (126. See Nos. 199, 200, 201, 203).

But the real business of the day began when the court adjourned, as can be surmised from 'the allowance which the

xix. An infringement of the lord's privilege. A few years later, however, 1604, it was enacted that anyone who had £10 a year in freehold, or £30 a year in leasehold land, or possessed goods to the value of £200, might build a pigeon-house or dovecot. As Selden puts it in his *Table-Talk*, 1689: 'Some men make it a case of conscience whether a man may have a pigeon-house, because his pigeons eat other folks' corn; but there is no such thing as conscience in the business; the matter is whether he be a man of such quality that the State allows him to have a dove-house; if so there's an end of the business: his pigeons have a right to eat where they please themselves.'

steward requyereth for the Dyett for hymeselffe, his menne, two jueries and the Gatherers of the Commone Fyne.' It is hard to know if the dishes are alternative or consecutive, but for the game course at the Court Leet dinner of 1590 there are '2 dozen larks, a capon, i.e. a fatted-cock, 3 geese, 2 dozen pigeons and 2 couple of rabbits'; and for the joint, '4 dishes of boiled meat, 2 double ribs of roast beefe, and half a mutton.' A sweet course consisting of 'Warden-Pyes and Fruet' was added in 1596. The three courses were washed down with a gallon, sometimes with two gallons, of wine, and about as much beer as would flood out the river Hiz. It was usual to pay 5s. for the 'Baecking of the Venysons,' another 5s. 'for wood and Coock's wages,' and 2s. 'for firing burnt in the Steward's Chamber.' At the Court in 1590 Docwra had collected £8 0s. 8d. altogether in fines and rents and fees, and of this no less than £2 11s. 8d. was spent upon the dinner (126. No. 239). One would have thought that the chance of getting a free dinner like that should have persuaded Docwra to hold courts every half-year, according to the custom. But then, as his epitaph says, 'he was wont to live plentifully, and in his own household was worthily esteemed for liberal house-keeping.' He could have dinners enough without coming down to Hitchin.

It is clear that he neglected his duties as Steward; for in 1604 Sir Robert Cecil has to request him to hold a Court before Lady Day 'to preserve order and to prevent disturbance of the deputy-bailiffs in their office' (128). It is to be regretted that the rolls of that Court are lost, for they should have been exciting to read. Cecil's interference, however, had been effective. All the time that King James's Queen held the manor, 1603–19, the bailiffs were scrupulous and punctual in their accounts (127).

XII

On Queen Anne's death in 1619 the manor was assigned to trustees for the use of the Prince of Wales (131), who, when he became king as Charles I, followed the laudable custom of his predecessors and made it over to Henrietta Maria (79. 3. 9). Before settling the manor upon his son, King James had raised money for himself by selling the timber to the tenants for £266 16s. (132). The valuation made by Sir Ralph Coningsby, Sir Rowland Lytton, Sir Thomas Pope Blunt, Sir

Henry Fanshawe, John Shotbolt and Robert Treswell shows 'all and singular the King's Majesties trees which are tymber and other great trees which are not tymber and all dead and decayed trees,' field by field on each copyholder's estate and their value estimated in loads. A grant of the whole was taken by Thomas Gaddesden and Thomas Chapman, brother of the poet, on behalf of the tenants, each of whom was given the chance of buying his own trees at the valuation figure. The King needed the money badly enough, but many writers of that age grieved that the Crown timber, which had been carefully nursed by Henry VIII and Elizabeth for building the wooden walls of old England, should have been sold to pay the debts of their degenerate successor. Also the time soon came when this very timber was required. In 1676 more than twenty tons had to be fetched all the way from Salcey Forest in Northamptonshire to rebuild Charlton Mill and Shotling Mill, which had become too 'old and ruinated to do their work' (137).

In 1620 Docwra, the Steward, 'meekly and Christianly rendered his soul to God' at the great age of ninety-two, having seen five kings and queens sit on the throne of England, himself careful the while, as his epitaph records, 'not to stoop to vain ambition's lure, but to content himself with his own estate, and to leave behind a name for wisdom, judgment and moderation.' From that time forward, right through the troubles of the Civil War, the manor was under the prudent administration of John Skynner, the twenty-first child of a family that had its seat at Norwich, but came originally from Flanders (50. 2. 61). He himself was a copyholder and the first Steward to dwell within the precincts of the manor. 'A Lord,' says a thirteenth-century writer, 'ought not to take counsel with men full of young blood and head-long courage, but with worthy and faithful men, ripe of years, who have seen much and know much, who are of good fame and will not turn aside from truth or knowingly counsel their Lord to do him harm.' Unless his tombstone lies, Skynner came near to realize this picture of the perfect Steward. 'A man,' he is affirmed to have been, of the shrewdest judgment, of the highest trust, '*consultissimus*' in all the affairs of the town and '*studiosissimus*' to promote the good feeling of the neighbourhood. 'He held the guardianship of the manor more than thirty years,' and died in peace of mind on December 16, 1660, having loyally lived on to the great age of ninety-one in

order to see the restoration of the King. His son Ralph, whom he trained to follow him as Steward, lived to be ninety also—the third steward in succession to reach that age—and both bequeathed almshouses for the old age of those Hitchin men who had not been so careful or fortunate as they (50. 2. 61, 64, 65, 83).

Only a few rough minutes of Skynner's rolls have survived the disorder and destruction of the Civil War, but there is an illuminating survey made in 1650 by the Parliamentary Commissioners into the 'Manor of Hitchin, late parcel of the possessions of Henrietta Maria, the relict and late Queen of Charles Stuart, late King of England' (134). The annual value still stands round about the £100—£7 5s. 9d. more, to be precise. The quit-rents of the Portman come to £73 2s. 5d.; those of the Foreign £6 8s. 4d. The fairs bring in £1; the market £19. The common fines, law-money, headsilver or tything silver total £1 15s., and the remaining £6 is made up by the 'fines and amerciaments of courts, fines upon descent or alienation, reliefs, waifs, strays, deodands, goods of felons, fugitive and condemned persons, hawking, hunting, fishing, fowling and all other profits and perquisites to the Regality of the said manor belonging or anyways appertaining' (134).

XIII

Though the tenants number not far short of three hundred, the manor itself has by this time, 1650, got enormously reduced in size. One by one those fourteen manors which went to make up Hiz and its appurtenances in Domesday Book have slipped away into private hands. There are still two manors within the manor; but of these the manor of the Rectory now belongs to Trinity College, held 'as of the King's manor of East Greenwich in free socage,' while that of Moremead has Sir Ralph Radcliffe for its lord. There is still the 'Foreign,' of course, the outlying portions of Hitchin Manor in Offley, King's Walden, Preston and Kimpton. But some of these have forgotten their ancient dues. Preston, which used to send the lord of Hitchin a sparrow-hawk every year, now substitutes 3s. 4d. King's Walden, which should render 5s., renders nothing, and has clean forgotten the pound of cummin-seed which ought to go each Candlemas to the Sheriff of Hertford (134). With all these changes, it is pleasant to see how strictly the manorial customs

of Hitchin Portman have been preserved. Not a jot or tittle has been taken away. Something, indeed, has been added, at least in this survey, for, with their lady in exile and never likely to return, the jurors made the most of their opportunity. They had an eye to the future. Some had signed three years before that 'Petition of divers knights gentlemen and other inhabitants of the County of Hertford made to Sir Thomas Fairfax, Captain Generall of the forces raised for the Preservation of the Kingdome,' which urged 'that the body of the Kingdome consisting much of copyholders, who for the most part have been very cordiall and faithful to the parliament, should not now be left finable at the will of the lord, in regard the generality of them have been very malignant and much disaffected to a Parliamentary or thorough Reformation and from whom they cannot but expect very severe dealing' (133). It was a time of wild expectations. Anything might come to pass. If Parliament had the pluck to cut off the head of their lord the King, why should it not cut off the heads of other manor lords and make copyholders into freeholders for good and all? Well, that was not to be, and so far as Hitchin was concerned there was scarcely need. The fines were certain; the burdens were light. 'The favourable hand of time,' as Sir Edward Coke was observing that very year, 1650, 'hath so enfranchised these copyholders, that whereas in Saxon times their services did consist wholly in Feasance, now they consist in Render, in User, and in Prender.'

About this time, certainly, one observes in the tenants an assurance and self-possession, as if for the first time they were coming into their estate. In the manor courts aforetime the Steward did all the talking. Now the tenants take the lead, and leave the Steward to do the writing. It is their Court Leet, and they intend to make it respected and obeyed. One begins to hear more of contempt of court; John Hanscomb, one of the jurors, is presented for contemptuously departing the court without leave, 'and he being three times publicly called and not appearing is amerced 40s.' (162. 3). Again it is decreed 'that all such tenants of this manor and resiants within the precincts of this Leete as have not made their respective appearance at the Court Leete and Court Baron, every one of them of the degree of a Knight, Esquire or Gentleman be fined 2s. 6d. apiece, every yeoman and maltster 1s. apiece, and every other tenant and resiant 6d. apiece' (162. 5).

Resiants or not, we may as well make *our* ' respective appearances ' at some of these courts ; for it is two centuries since we attended those of 1471. It will be instructive to see what changes have taken place in the interval. We have hinted already at a growth in authority and prestige, an extension of jurisdiction into extra-manorial affairs. Apart from other evidence, this might be inferred from the number of new officials. There is, of course, the bailiff, the hayward, the shepherd and the ale-taster as in mediæval times, though some of these offices are now conferred on women (xx). But now, in addition, there is a separate bailiff of the market : ' 1708. It is presented that Eleanor Sewster, widow, bailiff of the market of Hitchin, does not purge the market place there and remove the muck to the common dung hill once in every week according to the order ' (130. *c.* No. 22/5). There is also a bell-man with a bell-house set up in the centre of the market square : ' 1619. Appointment of John Garner as Towler for the Market. 1722. Ordered that James Smith shall at the usual hour in future sound the merchant-bell (*campanam mercatoriam*) under forfeiture of 30d.' (130. *c.* No. 22/7). There are also a leather-searcher and sealer, a beadle, a common-hoggerd, a pit-keeper and crier. By an act of humanity the office of crier was allowed to be held in conjunction with that of ale-taster ; so that the hoarseness arising from the one might be alleviated by the cooling draughts of the other.

XIV

Now let the rolls speak for themselves ; and for this purpose you may take them pretty much at random. The tale is the same whichever you choose to untie (xxi).

Here is one where proclamation is being made in open court that Woolmardine Plumb is dead, and his heir Peregrine comes forward and prays to be admitted. In due time, and often before his forty years' tenure is run, he, too, will be gathered to his fathers, and Ephraim, his son, be tenant in his stead. But the name of Plumb goes on ripening from roll to roll, and

xx. The churchwardens went so far as to appoint a woman to the office of sexton.

xxi. The extracts that follow are selected from the rolls dating from 1672–1762. See Bibliography (130. *c* & *d*, and 162).

Friday Furlong is still Friday Furlong all the centuries through. One generation gives place to another; but each son of Adam, no better than his father, is found committing the same manorial offences for which his forbears were in mercy. It is all latent in the soil, and with the copyholder, locally known as the Hertfordshire hedgehog, the soil is to say the soul.

As one might expect, it is the entry of offences on these rolls that makes them so readable to this day, so descriptive are they of the hurly-burly as well as the humdrum of English country life. Let us speak of personal offences first. It is complained of Isabella Planet, for example, that 'she is a verye notable scold' (162. 7); likewise of Joan Terrier that she is a common *garulatrix et perturbatrix*, that is to say gossip and disturber of the peace (162. 9); and, on sufficient proof forthcoming, it is ordered that they shall have the judgment of the 'stoupe' or ducking-stool (xxii). This tittle-tattle became so troublesome that the Steward found it necessary to deal with it in his charge to the jury at the opening of the courts: 'You shall enquire if there be any Evesdroppers which stand under walls or windows by night or by day to heare tales and to carry them to others to make strife and debate between the neighbours' (163). On hearing of another scandalous complaint 'it is ordered by the jury that the widow Roberts shall not att any time or times hereafter throw or cause to be flung out of her window any Chamber-Pott or Potts, whereby it may be an annoysance to Edward Rumbald and the rest of her neighbours upon pains to forfeite 6s.' (162. 11). At almost every court someone is amerced for 'refusing to pay the head-penny to the Headborough' [or Constable]; and of course the orchard of the absent lord is a temptation that someone yields to every summer: 'It is presented that Guy Barfoot and Moses Sparepoint broke and entered the close of the lord's garden and took away the fruit of his cherry trees; therefore they are in mercy' (162. 12). Goliath Spurling is likewise in mercy 'for stealing brush wood out of the lord's new Coppice' (162. 13). Only once was any discourtesy shown to the Steward, but that was discourtesy indeed: 'It is presented that Humphrey Woolcot did exclaim and rail against Bostock Toller, Gentleman Steward of this manor, as a mountebank

xxii. 'Cucking-stool' is the more usual form; and it is as well to be familiar with it or a student might mistake the entry on a later roll, in which the judgment reads 'that she shall be *cooked*.'

HITCHIN MARKET AND TOWN WORTHIES

From a painting by Samuel Lucas, *circa* 1840, in the New Town Hall

attorney and the lord's hireling creature, and that he would have the court books out of his hands and cast them on the common laystall (dunghill) and, often as the bailiff cried the court, he did sing out lustily: "Come, come away to the Tavern I say" (xxiii), so that none that stood by was able to hear' (162. 14).

Offences against trade are not so much in evidence; but there is enough to show that the jurors exercised a wide control over masters and men alike. 'You shall enquire,' says the Steward in his charge, 'if all the artificers do make good work as they ought, and if any make deceit in the same in deceiving of the people you ought to present their names' (163). Punishments are meted out to those 'who sell corrupt wine,' to those, who neglect 'to make their bricks sizable according to the statute, 1685,' to those 'who exercise the craft of shaving on the Sabbath Day,' to those 'who keep hand-mills to the prejudice of the mills of the lord,' to those 'who set up tressels in the market place on days other than market days,' or 'place their stalls beyond the Stockhouse there' (162. *passim*). There are complaints by the *mercatores stellati*, or chapmen who have stalls, of the 'greate number of forrayners that have crept into the market,' and of bribery and corruption on the part of the bailiff: '1697. Presented that William Heard, bayliffe, hath demanded and received two pence for two shewpennys of a man for standing with his goods under the penthouse of James Poulter in the market place, contrary to a former order in that behalf. Ordered that William Heard shall not suffer any stall or stalls to be sett up before any houses in the market place within six foot of the eavesdropping of the penthouses under pain to forfeit 20s. to the Lady of the Manor' (162. 8). There are also complaints of those who use light measures in the market: '1685. Presented that John Whitbread of Shitlington, Co. Beds, yeoman, used false weights in selling goods and merchandise within the precincts of this View of Frankpledge and scourged and abused the taster of beer to whom pertained the inquisition and scrutiny of false weights. Therefore he is in mercy, 10s.' (130. *c.* 24. 165). There are complaints against those who use no measures at all: '1718. John Draper and George Lyle of Hitchin make oath and say that the Lord of the Manor hath all along used and ought to find and provide a standard weights and measures. The

xxiii. The first line of a catch that was printed in *Antidote against Melancholy made up into Pills*, 1661.

Pound of the manor is decayed and useless, and the weights and measures are imbezzled or lost' (138. *a*).

XV

In the matter of town regulation and town improvement the Court Leet of this period was remarkably vigilant, and did in a resolute way many of the things which those timid, temporary officers, the wardens, overseers and surveyors, would have taken years to consider and still further years to carry out. Peremptory orders are issued to the tenants: to keep buckets of water outside their doorways as a precaution against fire: to cleanse the pavements and causeways in front of their tenements: to refrain 'from setting up waggons and other things of bulk and burden on the waste of the lord in Bancroft' (162. *passim*). Public health is to be regarded. The market-place is to be 'besomed and swobbed down' every Tuesday night. The bailiff is no longer to make a dunghill there. Nor is he or anyone else to empty a 'house of office,' i.e. privy, into the river until ten o'clock at night. Butchers and knackers are to take heed to their ways. No such person is 'to suffer his meate to corrupt in his shop,' or leave any butchers' blocks out in the night-time in any part of the shambles, which stood in the market-place. The 'greate and noysome abuse of butchers throwing blood and ropps [intestines] and other garbage about the streets' is strongly condemned. If such abuse continues proper regulations are to issue 'for slaughtering beefs and killing veals and muttons in the shambles.' An end is made to the 'fleeing [flaying] of dead horses by the roadside near the town leading to Butts Close, which is not only a real nuisance to the inhabitants, but may prove of ill consequence by Frighting of Travellers' horses.' Those who wish to 'flee' dead horses in future must first drag their carcases to the seclusion of the Sand-dells or Chalk-dells where none may be affrighted (162. *passim*). Another great nuisance, to wit the thronging of idlers and unfortunates into this royal manor, must be sternly suppressed: '1697. Noe inhabitant of this manor shall at any time lodge any pedler, petty chapman, tinker or any other wandering person or any of their wives, children or followers above two nights together upon pain to forfeit to the Lady for every such offence 5s. 1708. Presentment of Henry Spencer for giving hospitality

to a travelling woman and her daughter for more than two nights at a time, against a former order in this case made. Therefore in mercy, 5s.' (130. *c.* 22/5).

The fourth and by far the largest category of manorial crime is that which contravenes the rules of good husbandry and the regulation of the commons. In such matters the fines are substantial, as one might reasonably expect; for under the open-field system the sins of one tenant were pretty certain to be visited on all. So one finds that 'the occupiers in the hamlet of Walsworth are amerced 10s. for every rood in the Lammas Ground which they have presumed to plow up.' Sir Ralph Radcliffe, Robert Lucas, Laurence Tristram, Thomas Pulter and others are in mercy 'for keeping sheep on land sown with seed called St. Foyne's seed' (130. *c.* 22/3) (xxiv); and 'for pollarding oak trees without leave.' Galbraith Tarleton similarly 'for cutting down greate limbes from his apple trees contrary to good husbandry, and for disobeying the court's order "that every man mowe his thistles in his fallow field so oft as need requireth in payne of every land 4d."' (162. 15). Inquiry is to be made at every court 'whether there be any crow nets kept or whether the nests be destroyed when they begin to breed.' It is alleged against Lawndey Bowling that 'he has obstructed the common way through the hay fields.' John Marshall and others are presented for 'layeinge earth and Rubbidge so as to obstruct the opening to the Pound' (162. 16). James Wittingstall for 'rescuing his cows as they were being driven to the pound' (162. 18). Half-a-crown is to be paid to the herdsman as a forfeit 'for every cow turn'd to herd without being nob'd'; and a shilling 'for such as obstinately deny to cause their swine to be wringed' (162. 19). Sleep Dearmer is summoned 'for leading his geese into Butts Close and for speaking slightingly

xxiv. This is an early reference, 1685, to this grass seed, nowadays spelt 'sainfoin.' Its use in farming was just becoming general. The first printed reference to it is in A. Speed's *Adam out of Eden*, xiv, 108, published in 1626. 'A Gentleman,' he writes, 'hath this year about thirty acres of S.Foyne.' Its reputation grew apace. Worlidge, in his *System of Agriculture*, published in 1669, says: 'This St. Foyne or Holy Hay hath in several places of England obtained the preference above clover grass, for that it is so great an improvement on our barren lands.' In 1680 the question was raised by the Rector of Luton nearby, whether sainfoin, being sown and thrashed like corn, was to be reckoned as such, and the tithe on it paid to the impropriator of the great tithes, or reckoned as hay and so be subject to vicarial tithe.

against the jurymen and the court's presentments, wherefore he is in mercy, 30s.' (162. 20). Adam Hurst is mulcted for keeping beagles or hounds and destroying the lord's game' (xxv) (162. 20). Other tenants for keeping mastiffs and dogs that worry sheep. Abraham Thompson for 'keeping a glandered horse' (162. 21). To prevent the infection of horned cattle it is ordered that 'those designed for slaughter by butchers are not to be put on the commons.' Such cattle as are allowed on the commons must be kept under control: 'It is presented that Cushai Harborne's cattle have trampled down the sheaves of Charles Darton's corn' (162. 23). Those who 'presume to depasture cattle upon the commons without having any right,' or who 'oppress the commons' by turning out to grass more beasts than their holdings allow, are rigorously punished; but an exception is made in favour of the parish poor: 'no person shall keep any horses on any of the Green Commons in Walsworth Fields from May Day to Lammas Day where the poor usually herd their cows under penalty of 10s.' (162. 24).

XVI

Leaving the tenants to ponder over their sins, and their beasts to browse upon the common, we may turn our attention once more to the lessees and the stewards of the manor. When King Charles came into his own again in 1660, the manor of Hitchin, 'with its fruits, commodities, advantages, emoluments and hereditaments,' was restored to its rightful lady, Henrietta Maria, the Queen Mother (136), who leased it on easy terms to her favourite, Sir Richard Fanshawe, then Ambassador at Madrid, where she also was living in retirement (149. *f*). He died unexpectedly in 1667, leaving his widow only 'twenty-five doubloons to bring home a family of three-score servants'; for his salary was £2,000 in arrear, and he had expended £5,815 on the public service which the public could not be persuaded to repay. To save Lady Fanshawe from starvation, Henrietta

xxv. A statute passed a few years previously (22 & 23 Chas. II, c. 25) had forbidden all persons, except such as had a freehold estate worth £100 per annum or long-leasehold worth £150, or were the sons and heirs-apparent of esquires, from having or keeping any greyhounds or other game dogs, or any guns, bows, ferrets, nets, lowbels, air-pipes, gins, snares or other engines for the purpose of taking or destroying game.

Maria renewed the lease of Hitchin in her name, and offered to add a pension of 30,000 ducats and a mansion in Madrid if she and her children would join the Church of Rome (149. *f*). To the last suggestion Lady Fanshawe turned a deaf and a Protestant ear, but she was glad enough of the lease, which enabled her to make an English home only a few miles distant from Hitchin. Unhappily the Queen Mother died in 1669, and Charles II's Queen, Catharine of Braganza, who succeeded to the manor, declined to renew the lease; rather ungraciously, for Sir Richard Fanshawe had been the very knight who on the treaty of her marriage had brought Charles's portrait to her at Lisbon, and in his knightly way he had laboured to write poems in her honour (149. *f*). Twenty years later, 1689, when she, too, was a widow, and the Stuarts were once again upon their travels, she was willing to lease the manor to anyone who would take it; with the result, to use the words of the Steward, Maurice Johnson, that 'His Grace the most noble John, Lord Holles, Duke of Newcastle, out of a grasping and unbounded desire of gain, surreptitiously obtained this manor' (19 & 138). In spite of what Walpole called his 'crocodile disposition,' the Duke was not fated to crawl out the full period of his lease. When that expired in 1720, James Bogdani, the eminent Hungarian painter of still-life, who had settled in England and had married the daughter of Samuel Hemminge, Receiver-General of the late Queen's estates, thought he might as well use the influence of his wife's family and obtain a new lease for himself (149. *f*). He thereupon instructed George Draper, his solicitor, who was also Steward of the Manor, to make an application; but Draper, moved apparently by the same grasping and unbounded desire of gain, did a very different thing. In Bogdani's 'complaint to the Lords of the Treasury touching the manor and mills of Hitchin, leased by accident to George Draper,' he says that 'the man was his intimate acquaintance and was ordered by him to solicit their Lordships for a lease. To his amazement he finds that Draper has obtained a warrant for the lease to himself. He prays that Draper's wicked practices may be discountenanced' (138. *b*). 'Bogdani,' says Walpole, 'was a man of a gentle and fair character'; but there was to be no more still-life for him until he found it in the grave. The fraudulent lease was annulled. The unjust Steward was cast out of office. Worn out with anxiety and poverty, however, Bogdani died

before the new lease could be signed (142). From that time forward until 1815 his son William and his grandson William Maurice had the quiet enjoyment of the manor. When their oft-renewed lease ran out, Anthony Rhudde, of Uttoxeter, was granted a term of twenty-five years, which in 1817 was assigned to William Wilshere. Upon its expiration in 1843 the manor reverted to the Crown, and in the hands of the Crown it still remains (50. 2. 43).

One or two of the stewards of this last period deserve a passing word. There was, for example, Sir Robert Howard (149. *h.*), who in 1672 got himself appointed over Ralph Skynner's head—a piece of Court favour simply; for what with marrying and managing four wives, and writing four plays, and composing forty-four poems, which Sir Walter Scott described 'as of almost freezing mediocrity,' he bothered as little about the business of the manor as the seven nightingales of Charlton who, as customary freeholders, are said to pay their quittance in song. Thirty years later the office was entrusted to one who bore the formidable name of Batalion Shotbolt (an echo surely of the Civil War); his signature on the rolls stands out colossally clear, as though written with the end of a pike. His Latin is a queer mixture of good and evil, but he who runs may read, at least if he be an Englishman: e.g. '*unum gardinum vocat un garden plott*' (162. 25). His successor in the stewardship said of him both unkindly and untruly, 'Mr. Shotbolt made no rolls, nor hardly any copies, nor was capable of so doing, thereby introducing horrid Confusion in the affairs of the manor' (19. 13. *b.*).

In 1721 William Bogdani, who was an eminent arithmetician, selected for his steward Maurice Johnson, who was librarian of the Society of Antiquaries and founder of the famous Gentlemen's Society of Spalding (19. 21). He was a man of amazing erudition and remarkable even in that abundant age for his prolific outpourings of learned papers. His wife, in her own way, was no less prolific. She bore her husband twenty-six children, of whom we are pleasantly informed that sixteen were accustomed to sit down together at one table. Whilst steward here Johnson revived the ancient but rarely observed custom of filing his rolls each year in the Exchequer, to which carefulness this chapter is not a little beholden. He also compiled a history of the manor in manuscript (19), not only to please

his lord, but to serve as evidence should any of its customs come to be corrupted in the course of time. That was an evil by no means imaginary. Johnson had seen it with his own eyes when he first took over the manor. In his history he has much to say of the sad state into which its affairs had fallen 'thro the frauds and defaults of the Duke of Newcastle's agents whilst his Grace continued Firmar.' It really needed an antiquary and an arithmetician to get things into order, though Johnson does fret a little at the 'infinite paines' taken by his lord in the examination of the rentals. The accounts come back receipted at long last; but even then they bear the exasperating endorsement 'a true bill, all errors excepted.' As Bogdani was always worrying to know what had become of the sporting-rights, Johnson says explicitly in his history that the fishery being unstocked is not capable of being let. As for the game, this also brings 'no profitt, but some hare and Partridge have been sent to the Lord, and sometimes a dish got for the Steward at the courts' (19. 17).

Maurice Johnson and his two sons upheld the office and dignity of steward for fifty-four years. They were followed in 1770 by Richard Tristram, who came of an ancient Hitchin stock, and 'during a long life spent in the profession of the law,' as his monument not too happily records, 'maintained the most *unsuspected* integrity' (50. 2. 69). It is always good to see his name upon a roll, for he was a witty soul, and could be witty even upon parchment. In one of the rentals, where he has occasion to set down the name of 'the late Joseph Haire, Perrukyer and Barber,' he adds with a sly stroke of the pen 'and his haires' (162. 27). In the schedule of copyholds held by Dr. Thomas Burr, M.D., he has altered the field name of the holding, *Kidney Hills*, into *Kidney Pills* (162. 28). Once again, in revising his list of copyholders in 1784 he pauses at the name of Hester Lynch Thrale, friend of Dr. Johnson, who, as the heiress of Sir Thomas Salusbury, of Offley Place, had been a tenant (144) for ten years (xxvi). A few months previously she had estranged her family and her friends by running off with the Italian musician Piozzi, and though she became properly married, Tristram evidently shared in the general indignation.

xxvi. The property consisted of a cottage at Kimpton in the 'Forreign' quarter of the manor. Gabriel Piozzi and Hester Lynch, his wife, surrendered t in 1791 to one Thomas Hine.

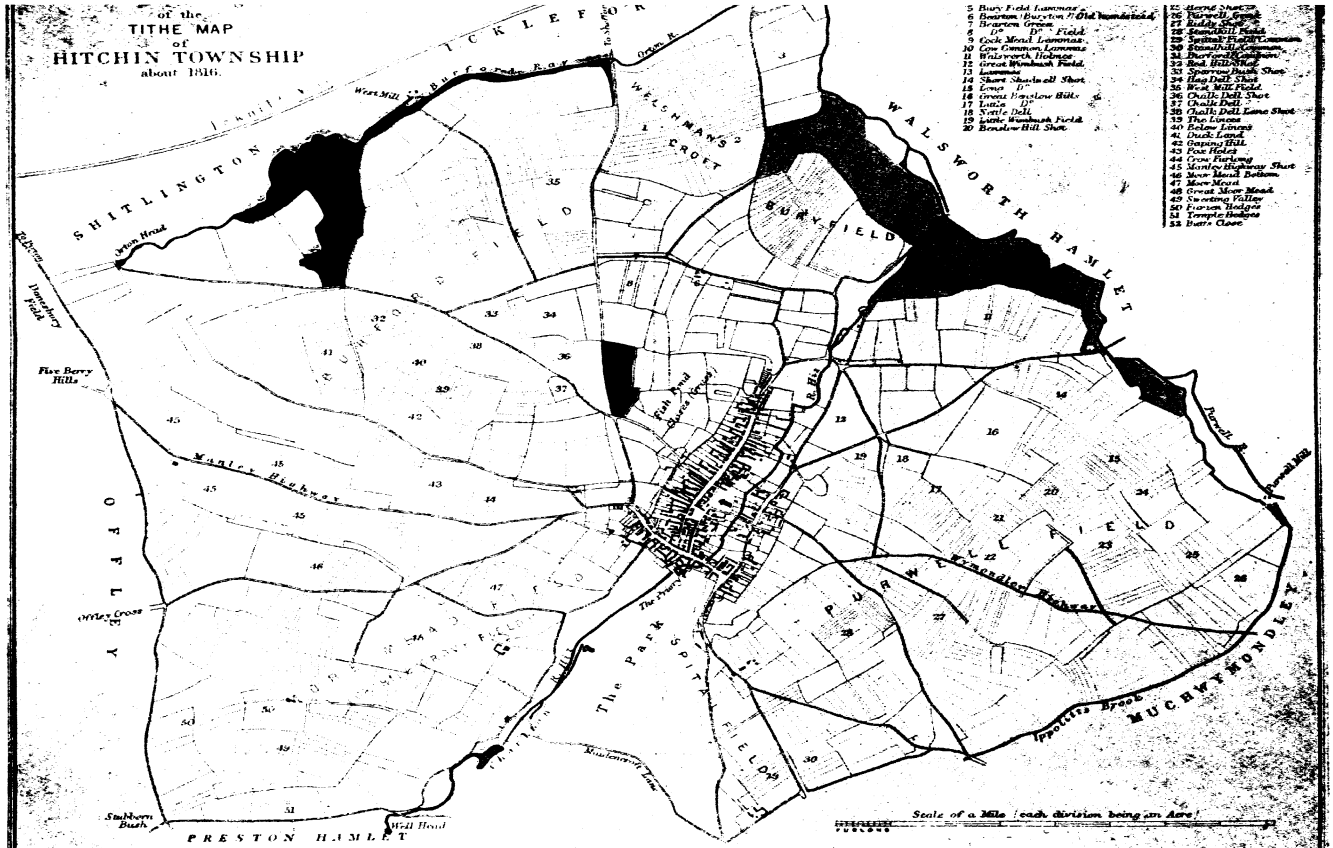
He makes the needful alteration in her name, and scribbles with his pencil in the margin, 'And this was the mother of eleven daughters!' (162. 29).

XVII

We come now within sight of these present times, and to the decline of Hitchin Manor. William Wilshere, who was first steward, 1786, and then lessee, 1815, did his utmost to maintain its respect and its revenues (50. 2. 43). If any thriving trader wished to imitate the gentry and dignify his Georgian house with a buttery or porch, or throw out a bay-window, or smarten up the front with 'pales and rails,' then Wilshere was down upon him for an encroachment on the waste, and for rents and acknowledgments. The courts were called more frequently, not as of old in a miserable stall in the market, or in the Red House at its corner where Tristram held his courts, but in a spacious room at the Cock Inn, which, oddly enough, lay in the parish of Shillington (xxvii). At a court there in 1819, upon complaints that the Ransoms and the Lucases had been fencing in slips of the common fields, an important survey and restatement was made of all the rights of common and rules of husbandry (xxviii). It is 'found and presented' *inter alia* that 'no person hath any right of common within this township in respect of any messuage or cottage built since the expiration of the 13th year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth unless the same shall have been erected on the site of an ancient messuage then standing' (55. 448). Persons so qualified may turn on the green commons and Lammas meadows '2 cows and 1 bullock or cow-calf under the age of two years.' The Rectors Impropriate of Hitchin 'are bound to find a bull for the cows of the township to go with the herd thereof and no other bull or bull-calf may be turned on the Commons.' Butts Close is to be the sole cow common from the 6th day of April, being old Lady Day, to the 12th day of May. Orton Mead from the 13th day of May, called old May Day, till the 14th day of February,

xxvii. This isolated piece of Shillington and a piece of Tewin that stood in the market square were absorbed in the parish of Hitchin by an Act providing for the extinction of such extra-parochial holdings in the year 1868, 31 & 32 Vict. c. 122. s. 27.

xxviii. This was printed in full as an appendix to Seebohm's *English Village Community*, pp. 443–53.



TITHE MAP OF HITCHIN TOWNSHIP, 1816, SHOWING THE STRIPS HELD BY THE MANORIAL TENANTS IN THE OPEN FIELDS

called old Candlemas Day. The Plats (xxix) near Grove Mill are an open common from Whit Sunday to old Lady Day. Cockmead and Bury-mead are commonable from old Lammas Day to old Lady Day. Geldings may be depastured on Butts Close from August 13th to St. Valentine's Day. There is common for sheep levant and couchant on the arable from the time when the corn is cut and carried to the time when the same is sown again; at all other times on that part of the green commons known as Old Hale. Any occupier at his will and pleasure may enclose and fence any part of his land lying in the common fields, and hold the same in severalty, but no right of common on other land shall be claimed in respect of the land so enclosed. The common fields, it is declared, 'have immemorially been and ought to be kept and cultivated in three successive seasons of Tilthgrain, Etchgrain and Fallow.' Every commoner turning his cattle upon the commons is obliged to pay one shilling a head yearly for scouring the ditches and repairing the fences and hedges, and three pence a head weekly in addition for the herdsman's wages. And it is to be clearly understood 'that no person entitled to common for his cattle may turn or suffer the same to remain on any part of the commons between the hours of six in the evening and six in the morning' (55. 448–50).

There is in these new regulations a strange echo of those that were being formed a thousand years before: customs that have 'immemorially been or ought to be kept.' All through the ages, as a local historian has said, 'there is this picturesque glimpse of the old herdsman with his horn, each morning and evening from May to October making his procession to the meads and pastures of the manor, past homesteads from whose open gates the cow-kine, in obedience to the blast of the horn, walk out and join their fellows, and at evening the herd in returning drops its ones, twos and threes at every farmyard gate like children going to and from school. The animation among the cattle when, after six months' silence, the horn was heard once more was a sight to remember and a remarkable instance of the sagacity of animals' (xxx).

xxix. The word 'plat' here signifies level and open ground. In the North country it is understood to mean a small bridge.

xxx. Alfred Kingston, the historian of Royston, in his *Fragments of Two Centuries*, p. 105.

XVIII

After William Wilshere's death in 1824 there were signs of rapid decay. The new life he had infused into the decrepit system seemed to die out with him. On every side encroachments were being made upon the jurisdiction of the manor. Its control of highways and public health was passing to the vestry and the local boards. Its market tolls were dwindling, and were soon to be sold by auction and purchased for the town. Its authority over crime had always been disputed. There could be no confidence or dignity in a tribunal where there was no sifting of evidence, no hearing of the culprit; where evildoers were not tried but on mere hearsay and neighbours' spite adjudged to be in mercy. There remained to the Court Leet little more than the petty delinquencies of domestic, manorial life, together with the wide and elastic offence denoted by 'a common nuisance.' So you find the presentments becoming steadily more perfunctory, often degenerating into a careless return of *omnia bene*, or, as it was expressed in a Welsh manor of the period, 'all well but the pigs.' In 1828 the Homage present William Chapman's yard as a 'filthy nuisance' (162. 31). In 1838 they present 'that Aaron Fisher's caravan now standing in the sand-dells is a public nuisance' (162. 32). In 1865 and long after they go on feebly protesting 'that there is not and has not been for many years within the manor a common pound for the use of the tenants, which from the time whereof the memory of man is not to the contrary the Lady of the Manor has been accustomed to find' (162. 33 & 34).

The Court Leet still assembles, for the habit has grown too strong. But the Leet's business does but caricature its former usefulness. It is no more than the shadow of its former self. The manor which Tovi the Proud once conferred upon Waltham Abbey would confer no boon or benefit upon anybody now—only the honour of a fading name. Where is the great manor of 'Hiz and its appurtenances' that once Earl Harold held? Where are the knights' fees of the Baliols, the broad acres of the Kendales, the rent-roll of the House of York? A little while and the ancient house of copyholders will be no more; the Statute that awaits to extinguish their tenure has already the Royal assent (xxxi).

xxxi. This chapter was written in 1925. See Part VI and the 13th Schedule to the Law of Property Act, 1922, as amended by the 2nd Schedule of the Law of Property Amendment Act, 1924.

There is still, to be sure, a dinner every year. That has not suffered loss; it has even added to itself three courses since Queen Elizabeth's day. The dinner survives; the Steward still takes his fee; the cows wend their way as of old to the Lammas grounds; but the dominion, the power and the glory have departed for ever and ever.

THE CHURCH (i)

I

ERE is a building—each stone a page of Hitchin history—that should be a witness to us, a memorial to the children of this parish for ever. In its own style, in its own handwriting as it were, each generation has continued the chronicle down to the present day. But how difficult it is to spell out the dim and archaic signature of time or to trace a master-builder's plan in what seems to have been

'. . . moulded
By the inscrutable sculpture of the storms.'

If only these life-like effigies could speak—these merchants and manor-lords and priests! But the dust lies upon the unyielding marble of their lips. All their knowledge remains hidden in the grave. If only the prophecy of Habakkuk would come to pass, if only the dumb stone would arise, what might it not reveal! 'The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.' 'What mean ye by these stones?' We do not know.

These are some of the thoughts that pass through an historian's mind as he gropes about such a building and essays from a few broken clues to piece together the lost legend of a parish church. Mercifully, at St. Mary's we are not left so utterly benighted. For the earliest, darkest period of all we have the copy made by our historian Dunnage of some precious fragments of two fourteenth-century manuscripts by Thomas Cobham and John de Blomville (28). From Blomville we learn

1. This account of the Church owes much to the general advice of Sir William St. John Hope, Dr. J. Charles Cox and Canon C. W. Foster; and in particular to the previously printed studies by Mr. Geoffry L. Lucas and Mr. Walter Millard in the East Herts Archæological Society's *Transactions*, vol. i, part iii, pp. 225–59, and by Mr. A. Whitford Anderson in the *Victoria History of the County of Hertford*, vol. iii, pp. 13–18, and by the compiler of the *Hertfordshire Inventory of Historical Monuments*, 1910, pp. 117–19. In addition, the author should acknowledge his indebtedness to Professor A. Hamilton Thompson, author *inter alia* of *The Ground Plan of the English Parish Church*, 1911, and *The Historical Growth of the English Parish Church*, 1911, who read and revised this chapter in its original form.

THE PARISH CHURCH OF HITCHIN

From an engraving by W H. Oldmeadow of a drawing by J C. Oldfield dated about 1830

that in the year 758 the iron-hearted Offa, then at war with Beornred, the Mercian usurper, brought his army to Hitchin, and, using the town as a base, fought two sanguinary battles at Pirton and Pegsdon, which yielded no result, and a third at Offley, where he vanquished his enemy (28. 22). Being elected king in Beornred's stead, Offa decided to build a palace on the site of his victory, and stayed on at Hitchin to see the work well done. Thirty-four years later (792), when this man of blood had run his course and was 'seeking to retrieve his character and appease his conscience by paying court to Holy Church,' he caused a religious house to be founded according to the Rule of St. Benedict at Hitchin (28. 27). His son Egfrith laid its foundation-stone. 'It was a noble pile of buildings,' continues Cobham, 'its burial-ground very large; the Ickening Way went close by it on one side (ii) and the Brook [i.e. the Hiz] on the other' (28. 31). Offa seems to have committed the Monastery to the care of his kinsman Eadric, and when his own palace at Offley was ready, he made over to him the house at Hitchin with its elaborate furnishings and spoils of war (28. 30). These, however, were not long enjoyed, for in 796 Eadric was chosen Abbot of St. Albans in succession to Willegod, the first Abbot, who, 'being greatly opprest with sorrow for the death of Offa whom he exceedingly loved, pined away' because the King's body was not allowed to rest in the Abbey which he had founded and so lavishly endowed (iii) (28. 31).

ii. Cobham, it should be observed, is the only writer who makes Hitchin actually stand upon the Icknield Way. He goes on to explain that it was diverted into its present course three years later, when the Hitchin Hundred was formed (28. 32).

iii. The place of Offa's burial has always been a moot point in archæology. 'His body,' according to Roger Wendover, 'is said to have been conveyed to the town of Bedford and to have been buried in royal manner in a certain chapel outside of the town situate on the bank of the River Ouse. It is reported by nearly all the people of that neighbourhood even to the present day (i.e. 1225) that the aforesaid chapel, from decay and the violence of that river, was precipitated, together with the King's tomb, into the stream; and that the sepulchre is now seen by bathers in the summer-time deep beneath the waters, but though it has been sought with the greatest diligence, yet, as if by a fatality, it cannot be found.' As against Wendover's chronicle, the tradition has always persisted that Offa was buried at Offley in the church beside his palace. In 1777 all doubts seemed to have been put to rest, for John Jeeves, a Hitchin bricklayer, whilst digging a new vault at the west end of Offley Church, came upon a tomb covered with encaustic tiles, with what appeared to be the name of Offa inscribed upon them. The skeleton below measured seven and a half feet in length and was surrounded with honesty

The monks at Hitchin seem to have felt the loss of Eadric, 'whose munificence approached the verge of Prodigality.' In Offa's day, writes Blomville, 'this town was equal in splendour to St. Albans, and had many buildings on each side of the Ickening Street towards Wilbury, as are proved by their foundations' (28. 35). But Offa had set his heart upon St. Albans rather than Hitchin; the one was to increase and the other to decrease. Unhappily, no saint arose to give his name to the Monastery of Hitchin, and no monkish scribe was inspired to tell over the bede-roll of its benefactors. The little that has survived the ravages of time speaks only of disasters. We hear from Blomville that in 910 a great part of the monastery—and indeed of the town itself—was destroyed by fire. Offa's palace, which adjoined the church, was laid in ashes, and all its treasures perished in the flames (28. 32). As next to nothing is known of the monks after the fire, it is possible that their community was broken up and that the township appropriated, and perhaps remodelled, their 'noble pile of buildings' as a parish church. The Domesday Survey (1086) refers to it as the minster (*monasterium*) of Hitchin (90), which leaves the question open, for the word might signify a monastery pure and simple; or a college of secular priests or canons acting as the administrative centre of the hundred or the deanery, and serving the spiritual needs of those neighbouring churches which as yet were without a church; or, thirdly, it might signify a parish church that by its size and repute had become the head of a large ecclesiastical district (iv). It does appear as though the minster had attained

and rosemary leaves. At the instigation and expense of the Hon. Dame Salusbury, of Offley Place, Isaac Duncalf, stonemason and antiquary of Hitchin, had two of these tiles affixed to the walls of the south aisle. 'These tiles,' he set by way of warranty above them, 'were found within this church in 1777, which proves that King Offa was buried here.' To the grief and vexation of the parish, it was discovered by Cussans, nearly a hundred years later, that what had been deciphered as Offa was merely *ossa*, i.e. bones: *Ossa Will de . . . Mundo.* In 1836 Hemel Hempstead claimed to prove that the bones of the King of Mercia were buried there; but could produce no better evidence than the gossip of a sexton, who was evidently misled in the same way. It is clear that the bones of Offa are still to find. 'His soul,' according to a paper in Hitchin Priory, 'may be looked for in Hell.'

iv. 'In Hertfordshire,' writes William Page, 'the wealthy abbey of St. Albans dominated all the western side of the county, but there is evidence of minsters at Hitchin, Braughing and Welwyn.' For a valuable discussion of the word *monasterium* the student should read his paper in full: 'Some Remarks on the Churches of the Domesday Survey,' *Archæologia*, lxvi, pp. 61–102.

some such dignity, for it already possessed in its glebe two out of the five hides at which Hitchin was assessed, and was the mother-church of the two Wymondleys, which then formed one chapelry, and of Dinsley and Ippollitts as well (v). It was, moreover, the paramount Church of the deanery (79. 3. 17). In actual size the mother-church can hardly have been more imposing than her daughters, for the foundations show a nave of only 16 feet 6 inches wide, which, as Frederic Seebohm pointed out, is the extent of the old English rod. It reminds one that the men who built this early church were brothers of the men—perhaps the same men—who ploughed the land and used the rod as a measure (47. February 24, 1912).

II

However small it might be, the Church of Hitchin at the time of Domesday had the honour of belonging to the King, and it was apparently Henry II who, by a charter since lost but recited in and confirmed by a charter of Edward II, 'granted to the church of St. Mary of Helenstowe and the holy Nuns Serving God there the church of St. Andrew of Hiche with lands and tithes and all liberties thereto belonging, freely and absolutely exempt from all customs as well episcopal as archidiaconal, except that once a year the Archdeacon with a retinue of seven horsemen shall be entertained' (vi) (79. 3. 17; 279. iii. 413). In a legal dispute of the twelfth century concerning Elstow and Hitchin it was argued that the endowment was originally made by William Rufus on the persuasion of his cousin Judith, who had established a Benedictine Convent at Elstow in 1078 (vii); and that the privileges he had attached to the Hitchin lands were only defined and confirmed by his successors (79. 3. 17). However that may be, 'I will and strictly enjoin,' says Henry II, 'that they have and hold all these

v. Hitchin, Dinsley and Wymondley were still united in 1291, for in the Ecclesiastical Taxation of that year, to provide for Pope Nicholas IV's crusade, the three were assessed together on a value of £40 per annum.

vi. Seven was the limit laid down by the Lateran Council of 1179.

vii. In 1198 the Abbess claimed Hitchin as having been given by the Countess Judith herself, and produced charters to that effect under her seal; but the evidence as a whole points to this grant being fictitious (*Liber Antiquus Hugonis Wells*, 28).

well and in peace, freely and quietly and honourably, exempt from all aids and gelds and danegeld and assizes, and murders and pleas, and scutages, and warpeny, and all customs, and all land service, and that they have sac and soc, toll and team and infangenethef (viii) and all liberties which the free churches of my land enjoy' (279. iii. 413).

In the enjoyment of these liberties the holy nuns were not unmindful of their obligations. Indeed, as the world went then, the little Church of Hitchin must be deemed fortunate to have fallen into their hands. Throughout the three and a half centuries of the Elstow patronage there is no sign or complaint of the monastic extortions and 'holy selfishness' so prevalent elsewhere. Quite soon after coming into possession of the revenues of Hitchin, the nuns were faced with the problem of building a new church; for in that year of prodigies, 1115, when 'the starre called *Stella Cometa* or the blasynge starre apered,' and the rivers ran back to the sea, so that men walked dry-shod over the bed of the Thames, and the earth quaked, being 'moved to mischief by the air,' and 'yielded forth a hideous noise and cast forth flames' (ix). a hurricane smote St. Andrew's so that all the north side caved in and was reduced to a mere heap of ruins. Thereupon the people of the parish and their patrons set about making another St. Andrew's that should stand the wear and tear of time. Just three inches outside the walls of the early church, which were only 2 feet 6 inches thick, they laid the foundations of another structure with walls 4 feet in thickness. At the west end of the aisleless nave a massive bell-tower, partly constructed of reused Roman bricks, was added about 1190–1200, and there are signs that this was carried a stage higher in the second decade of the century following, when the present stair-turret, built against

viii. I.e. power to hold a court of their own, and administer justice and levy tolls and apprehend thieves. It is sometimes cited as a proof of Henry I's legal and linguistic skill that, when his secretary, reading out a charter, came to a clause granting sac and soc, etc., and stammered over the uncouth words, the King, 'who was well learned, was able to explain it all.'

ix. These details are from Baker and Fabyan, but most of the chroniclers pause in the midst of Henry I's reign to dwell upon these portents. William of Malmesbury tells rather prettily how the house where he sat writing was twice lifted up and removed into a different position, but the third and last shock providentially dumped him and the house back into its original site. In Lombardy the earthquake is reported to have lasted forty days 'and removed a town from the place where it stood a great way off.'

the wall without bonding, was erected at the south-east corner, and the present arch of three chamfered orders with half-octagonal responds and moulded capitals and bases was opened into the nave (x). Finally, as a protection against lightning and following the superstition of the times, they worked into the walls a number of flint implements of the Stone Age, which still turn up in seasons of repair and puzzle the antiquaries of the parish. On the completion of the work, about the year 1220, the nuns of Elstow were persuaded to endow a vicarage by Bishop Hugh of Lincoln, who was at that time devoting all his powers to detach the parish priests from the authority of the religious houses, and to secure them permanence of tenure and a competent livelihood under episcopal control. The nuns agreed to make over the dues of the high altar : mass-pennies, altar-bread, confession-offerings, along with two acres of land—one in each of the two fields—and a house for the ' two chaplains who are necessary.' The vicar on his part was to render the nuns thirteen marks by the year and to be responsible for the Synodals, i.e. Bishop's fees on the Easter visitation, and for the entertainment of the Archdeacon when he came (243. 3. 191).

With a new church risen like the Phœnix out of the ruins of the old, a vicarage endowed and the dreadful Interdict removed, it seemed after all as though the thirteenth century was to prove auspicious. Thomas de Suffolk and William de Diston, the first two vicars of Hitchin, lived in quiet enjoyment of the benefice for twenty-nine years each, a long tenure in an age so insecure (243. 9. 35 ; 243. 11. 297). Then suddenly a whole plague of calamities occurred. In 1278 (a black year, when seven murders are recorded in the parish) for some obscure reason the townspeople lost their temper with Hugh,

x. There has been some speculation, and not a little variance of opinion, amongst architects over the building and development of the tower in its several stages, and over the dating of the stair-turret, and over the earlier form of the spire. Bound up with these questions is the still more interesting question whether the church as a whole may not have developed from a central tower. There are hints and intimations that this may have been so ; indeed, Professor Hamilton Thompson and Mr. Geoffry Lucas go so far as to declare it probable. In support of this view Mr. Geoffry Lucas has produced thirty pieces of evidence of a technical character which, taken together, make up an imposing case. Those who are interested should study carefully the documents and plans specified in Nos. 210, 223, 225, 231, 238, and 254 of the Bibliography.

the vicar (xi), over the building of a churchyard wall. In spite of all their protests, he would have it set up, and they resolved to have it down. Simon the Sergeant, Andrew Gernon and Nicholas de Gemiford, with a mob of other assailants, 'came into the cemetery of Hyche to throw down the said wall, and thereupon came Robert le Dekne [Deacon] and tried to prevent them, and, a contention arising, Nicholas stabbed Robert in the head, so that he died thereof three days later.' Nicholas got clear away, but Vicar Hugh, being determined to avenge his deacon, broke into the house of another of the rioters and killed him, for which he himself was outlawed and later on captured and beheaded (*1. d.* No. 324. *m.* 47. *d.* & 50). The faithful people of St. Andrew were just getting over that disgraceful scene when, 1292, 'a violent tempest flooded the town and destroyed many of the houses. The church was struck by lightning and seriously damaged' (28. 48). Six years later, continues Cobham's Chronicle, 'the church was further damaged by the shock of an earthquake. In the centre of the building it gave way altogether, and all one side was shattered. By the next year the church had been restored, but in 1304 the greater part of the roof fell in, doing irreparable harm to many relics and monuments of antiquity' (28. 48 & 49).

It says much for the pertinacity and piety of the folk at Hitchin that they did not let themselves despair. This was the second time their Church of St. Andrew had been destroyed by earthquake. Was not earthquake the act of God? And was it not in Andrew's own hearing that Jesus had declared 'there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles. All these are the beginnings of sorrows' (Matt. xxiv. 7)? Why, then, fly in the face of what was evidently preordained?

III

While some faint-hearts argued in this wise, the majority manfully set out upon a third and last attempt; and to such good purpose that chancel and nave—this time of flint and

xi. There is a gap in the Institution Books of this period, and one cannot be certain that he was the vicar. The precise reference to him is 'Hugo le prestre,' and Canon C. W. Foster urges me to assume that he was only an assistant priest.

rubble with stone dressings from the famous quarry of Totternhoe, some fifteen miles away—were finished within the year. It is just possible we may have looked on the face of the master-mason who planned this new church, for an incised tile of that period has been found at the west end of the nave portraying a man in the civilian costume of the early fourteenth century. His left hand is raised and his right is pointing across his body. He is bareheaded. Over the tight-sleeved tunic he wears a loose, long-skirted garment reaching to the knee, with

sleeves that hang from the elbow. From a broad belt hangs his gipser or purse. On either side of the figure is the lower section of a column with its base (xii).

Once more, in spite of ill-omen, the church was given the name of St. Andrew (xiii), a dedication that had become more appropriate since the lord of Hitchin, John de Baliol, had been anointed King of Scotland. Less than six years had

xii. The column is the significant item in this description, but, as Mr. Walter Millard points out to me, if he were the master-mason he should carry a measuring-rod, a square or a pair of calipers. Carrying a purse, he looks more like the paymaster or ' clerk of the works.'

xiii. The Patron-Saint of Scotland seems to have been specially honoured in the diocese of Lincoln. In the county of Lincoln alone there are sixty-eight churches dedicated to him.

elapsed from the consecration of the new church when fresh trouble arose. For some reason a new bell-tower had not been thought essential in 1305. Only four years earlier it had been patched up at the instance of Bishop Dalderby, who wrote vigorously to the Archdeacon of 'the intolerable and dangerous defect in the reparation of the bell-tower of the parish church of Hicch, from which ruin, unless the same be remedied, there is fear of danger to both bodies and souls and of the demolition of the said church' (167). The parishioners, at that time under threat of 'the power of Canonical enforcement,' agreed 'to amend the same without delay in fitting manner as they were bound' (167). But, when another settlement occurred in 1311, their patience was exhausted; they would not lift a finger or a stone to support a tower that was always letting them down. They cared nothing for what their vicar or bishop might say, and even stole from the churchyard the materials that lay waiting to be used. It is clear from his 'General sentence for the Church of Hicch' that Dalderby's patience was exhausted also. 'To his beloved in Christ the dean of Hicch greeting, grace and benediction. It has come to our ears, through report from the neighbourhood, that some have assigned amongst the living what men by the award of their last will, and by the pious devotion of the faithful, have left to the sustentation of the fabric of their parish church. Certain satellites of Satan, as we have heard, in an impious and sacrilegious spirit have hitherto unjustly withheld and do withhold, have seized and do seize, have concealed, and do conceal, to the prejudice of the said church and the great hindrance of its fabric, the things so awarded as aforesaid; and by the bad example of other violent persons some who would perhaps contribute to the building desist from their pious intention. Wherefore we command and enjoin you, in virtue of obedience and under pain of excommunication, that you admonish the aforesaid presumptuous persons and effectually move them to restore such goods without delay to the collectors or proctors of the church or make satisfaction concerning the same. Otherwise when their names have been presented to you, you shall by our canonical office and authority compel them to do it by ecclesiastical censure, observing the lawful process. Given at Wheathampstead, 12 Kal. October in the eleventh year of our Consecration' (Dalderby's *Memoranda*, f. 195). If this fulmination had come from

far-off Lincoln, or even from Buckden, it might have been disregarded, but Wheathampstead was unpleasantly near, and Dalderby, though accounted a saint (217. 1), had a short way with sinners. The satellites of Satan, being not unwise in their generation, bargained with the good man for the least that need be done to avoid losing the respectable status of Christian men, with the result that the shallow angle pilasters of only a few inches in projection, which stood at the western corners of the tower, were overlaid by the two pairs of powerful buttresses, some ten feet in depth, which to this day sustain the huge bulk of masonry that tends to bulge outward on that side (238). For the last six hundred years these additions must have given much distress to architectural and æsthetic observers, and it is evident that they have reduced the belfry to squat and ungainly proportions. 'The tower,' writes Cole the antiquary, 'is one of the most clumsy and heavy ones that ever I saw' (196); and Salmon, in his County History, is driven to an ingenious defence. 'The steeple is low and disproportionate to the bigness of the church,' he remarks, 'but as the town stands in a bottom with hills about it, even if the steeple *had* been high, it would not have been seen at a distance' (10. 163). Uncomely it may be, and low, but at least it has served its purpose. Thanks to these buttresses, it has proved, as Charles Lamb would say, 'a stubborn piece of antiquity.' And, after all, its builders were concerned to make not something merely graceful, but something that would stand, something that in spite of tempests and earthquakes would keep their six tunable bells ringing to the glory of God from generation to generation. In the magnificently human art of architecture, as Ruskin once observed, 'there must be some equivalent expression for the trouble and wrath of life, for its sorrow and its mystery . . . mighty masses of shadow mingled with its surface.' Is it indulging too much licence of the imagination to discern here, also, in the very lineaments of this 'nobly and grimly architected' tower something of the devotion, the disasters, the despairs, the disputes that have gone to its making, unmaking and remaking, all curiously mingled into a strange harmony and blending with that of its many-sounding bells?

IV

The remodelling of the tower seems to have marked a change in the fortunes of the church. From that time onward one hears no more of jars or janglings among the people or falling in of the fabric. Perhaps we should not overlook a difference that arose about this time between the few Benedictine monks who lingered on at Hitchin in the chancel of the church and the monks of the sister, and now famous, community at St. Albans. But Abbot Hugh of Eversden was not the man to let such quarrels grow. He wisely hurried over to Hitchin with his monks, and with 'holy disputatious strife' thoroughly thrashed out the matters in dispute. The affair being settled, the united brethren feasted for three solid days, after which the Hitchin monks were invited to return with the others to St. Albans, and feasted there for yet another three days. By that time they were in complete accord. It seemed incredible they should have disagreed. *In vino unanimitas.* Soon after this (*circa* 1317) there is reason to believe that the Hitchin monks were absorbed into the St. Albans community; and, if that is so, the Benedictines departed from Hitchin just as the Carmelites came.

In sole possession now of their parish church, the good people of Hitchin were more disposed to improve it. This was the age, moreover, of church expansion, and, fortunately enough, it was the age of expansion in the wool trade, too. 'Amongst all crafts,' writes Thomas of Reading, 'this was the only cheife for that it was the greatest merchandize by the which our country became famous thorowout all nations.' It might be said without extravagance that Hitchin was built out of wool. Whilst the Baliols wasted their substance in riotous living, whilst the holy nuns besieged Heaven with their prayers, these prospering wool-staplers vied with one another who should have the most sumptuous mansion in Bancroft, and who should figure in St. Andrew's bede-roll as the most liberal donor of rich vestments, or curious windows, or carven screens. It would be hard to say—indeed, it scarcely matters—whether this sudden bounty sprang from 'a holy rivalry in this labour of love,' or whether, as was alleged in the contemporary dialogue of *Dives* and *Pauper*, it was done 'from a spirit of pomp and to have a name and worship thereby in the country.' The fact

remains: whether these wool-merchants vied with one another for social prestige, or whether their conscience urged the command of Christ to feed His sheep, in either case the church reaped the benefit. 'Not a vestment,' as Cardinal Gasquet says, 'not a banner, or hanging, or chalice but called up some affectionate memory both of the living and the dead.' If they got some 'worship' thereby, who shall grudge them that, or the innumerable obits, month-minds and trentals that were chanted over their graves, or the glittering dignity of their brasses, in which, with a proper pride in their trade and mystery, they are represented with the right foot on a sheep and the left on a woolsack, a pair of shears beside them, and their wives dressed up like ladies, with lap-dogs on their skirts? Their tombs have crumbled into dust, their brasses have been sold away to dealers in old metal, their merchant-marks on corbels and roof-bosses have now no recognition, but these were the men who in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries enlarged and enriched our church.

Let us consider in detail some of the things they did. During the first half of the fourteenth century they added a north aisle to the nave (the double chamfered doorway on that side is of the same date); and soon after its completion a south aisle was begun (79. 13). Until the thorough-scrape restorations of 1827, the arms of Edward II were to be seen emblazoned on the roof of the one and those of Edward III on the other (28. 94 & 95). There are some trifling disparities to be noticed in these two aisles. For one thing, the north is a little wider than the south; but the two of them, together with the nave, measure 61 feet 6 inches across, or only 6 inches less than St. Albans Abbey Church. Then, too, the piers are not symmetrically spaced; but, in spite of this irregularity and the simplicity of the design, the arcades are of pleasing character. For additional support the stumps of outside walling were left at either end, and these, for neatness' sake, were trimmed up with wrought stone so as to form responds in keeping with the arcade (228. 230–6).

Shortly after the completion of these aisles, two chantries were endowed for the chapels they enclosed. The altar of St. Peter, at the east end of the north aisle, was to have been served by as many as three chaplains under a munificent donation of Margaret de Kendale made in 1346. But for some reason

this gift failed of its effect, and in 1363 the chantry and its possessions were assigned to the house of the Gilbertine Canons at the Biggin (79. 12). In 1392 Sir Robert Turk and Master John Turk (xiv) paid Richard II forty marks for leave to found a chantry in the south aisle, and assigned three houses in Candelwyk Street, London, which they held of the King in free burgage, for its support (169). Meantime the nuns were enlarging the chancel to about one-half of its present length and most probably to its present width; but they were not content with this for long. They evidently meant to make their part of the church as spacious and imposing as the nave. In the fifteenth century the chancel was carried eastward once again, this time to within one bay of its present limits (79. 13). The fourteenth-century roof, with the cusped ornaments in its elaborately moulded panels, was given to the people, and became the enriched eastern corner, as we see it to-day, of the north aisle of the nave (225. 16 & 17). The half-octagonal jambs of the chancel arch, built in agreement with the nave arcades, were retained along with the arch for the time being, but eventually became the supports of the high four-centred arch of the fifteenth century, which by a hideous contrivance was made to perch with its smaller shafted jambs upon the capitals of the earlier arch (79. 14). The result is a caricature, and all the more unsightly because the builders, as though ashamed of their sins, have hushed up the lower portion in plaster (xv). Happily the eye is attracted from this ungainly piece of work by the unusual device of a window above the chancel arch, which was probably inserted at the same time and perhaps for the same reason (xvi).

xiv. Master John Turk was Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1376. Sir Robert is first known to the State Papers in the year of the Black Death (1349), when he was concerned in abducting Alice, daughter and heiress of John Greville, a ward of Humphry de Bohun. Much later (1381) he is found helping to put down the Peasants' Revolt as one of the nine justices in the county of Hertford commissioned 'to arrest those who congregate in unlawful assemblies, or who incite insurrection, and to put down their treasonable, hostile rising with armed force.' From 1378–92 he was one of the county's representatives in Parliament. In 1398 he served as Sheriff.

xv. As Mr. Walter Millard has pointed out to me, 'the undesigned result which stares us in the face has been brought about by the removal of the Rood gallery. Imagine the latter in position with the Rood hanging above in the arch, and the designed result appears something very different.'

xvi. These windows are not generally found outside East Anglia, but there are other examples at Chipping Norton, Deddington and Great Milton, Oxon; Tickhill, Yorks; Chipping Campden, Northleach and Winchcombe, Glos. The most famous is at Cirencester, where the window is of seven lights.

North
Arcade
Archway from Aisle
to South Chapel

V

There can have been no long interval between the completion of this fifteenth-century chancel and the construction of the side-chapels which were its natural development. These, however, were undertaken not by the nuns, but by Sir John Sturgeon, John Pulter, Thomas Abbot, John Wisebeard and those other merchants who, lest the glory should be given to another, were careful to emblazon their arms or marks here, there and everywhere for all the Hitchin world to see (229). They did well to be proud of their foundation, for it was in its full development to become the special glory of the church. We have spoken of side-chapels, but their scheme for the building of these involved the entire remodelling of the eastern portion of the church. Their plan, boldly conceived, was to carry their new chapels one bay beyond the chancel as recently extended; and then, leaving the high altar where it was, to extend the eastern wall of the chancel once again until it fell into line with the end wall of the chapels. It meant chancel arcades and clerestories; it meant the making of a charnel-house to accommodate the bones disturbed in the building. It meant, unless the nuns of Elstow helped them, a new chancel roof. But, on the other hand, it meant that they would possess an ambulatory and Lady chapel behind the high altar; a cross-aisle from chapel to chapel; a passage for those Sunday and high-festival processions so dear to the hearts of the people. It meant, finally, that theirs would be one of the few parish churches in England built after the collegiate or cathedral plan (xvii).

With this outline in our minds, we may now consider the work in detail. The chapel on the south side of the chancel, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and built about 1450, is a little earlier than that upon the north. Two of its benefactors —a man and a woman—may be seen portrayed in the label moulding-stops of the archway which gives access from the nave. One might shrewdly guess these to represent Pulter and his wife, for they are known to have been mainly concerned in the foundation, and in 1457 Alice Pulter left 'to the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the south part of the same church for necessary repairs, one noble.' She also directed 'that my lady

xvii. It may be interesting to name some of the others: Chesterfield; St. Nicholas, Newcastle; St. Mary Redcliffe at Bristol; Newark; Grantham.

cup of silver and gilt be put on sale, and that the money accruing thereby be distributed in two parts, of which I desire that one part be disposed for the purchase of a woven hanging to serve for the chancel of the church of St. Andrew in Hitchin so long as it will last, and I will that the other part be disposed in making pictures upon the roof of the chancel aforesaid and upon the roof of the new chapel' (228. 236–7). The chancel roof is no longer to be seen, but the ridged roof of the south chapel still endures, and, in spite of four and a half centuries of wear and tear and the rough hand of the restorer, it is still in sound condition and pleasant to behold. There are carved spandrels to its principals, carved bosses where ridge and principals meet, and faint traces of Alice Pulter's pictures in red, green, white and gold. Of the angel-supporters, some carry sackbut, psaltery and all kinds of music, some bear shields with the insignia of the Staple of Calais, whilst the one that is nearest the altar holds up a crown of glory for the King of kings (228. 236). Apparently there was a separate contract for this roof apart from the mason's work, as its spacing in no way regards the wall and windows underneath.

In this chapel, now known as the Radcliffe Chapel, there are remnants of the stalls used by the master and wardens of the fraternity known as 'Our Lady's Gild.' Under the eastern-most arch of the arcade at one time stood the canopied tomb of Sir John Sturgeon, its first master (225. 13). The table tombs of Pulter (225. 14), Abbot and Wisebeard were stationed along the side chancel screen, but in the early nineteenth century, in order that the churchwardens might have a few more sittings to sell, these were removed to the north chapel and meaninglessly huddled together there against the wall, and so remain unto this day (228. 237; 206. 4). These were the men whom Edward IV in 1475 had licensed to 'commence, make, found, erect and establish a certain fraternity or perpetual gild to the praise, glory and honour of God and the most Glorious Virgin Mary; with leave to make lawful and honest assemblies of themselves and to elect a master and two Wardens who shall support the burden of affairs and be responsible for the wholesome governance of the Gild' (172). By way of endowment, the brethren and sisters were empowered to hold property to the value of twenty-four marks by the year, and the issues, profits, customs and amercements of two fairs on the Wednesday

in Easter week and the Feast of St. Edward, King and Confessor (172). In a sadly degenerate condition—swings and roundabouts and coco-nut shies—these fairs linger on unto the present day, though for business reasons that on Wednesday in Easter week has been transferred to the Tuesday, which is our market-day. For the keeping of the peace and the law-merchant, the master and wardens were privileged to hold courts of pie-powder (xviii) within the precincts of these fairs. Out of their revenues they were to maintain two chaplains 'to celebrate divine service every day for ever in the church of St. Andrew for our wellbeing and that of our most dear Consort Elizabeth, Queen of England, while we shall live, and for our souls when we shall pass away from this light, and for the souls likewise of all the faithful deceased in the church aforesaid' (172). If it was not sufficiently clear from the patent roll that licensed the gild, it is clear from the will of Sir John Sturgeon that he had the ear of the King and was the real founder. 'I bequeath,' he says, 'unto the fraternity of our blessed Lady Saint Mary the Virgin holden and kepte in the parish church of Hitchin 20s. yearly, so that the brethren and sustren of the same perpetually have my soule specially recommended unto God in their praiers as begynnar of the same' (170). John Scoot, 1491, William Chambers, 1519, John Fryday, 1535, and many others of the period made similar bequests to the fraternity, and some, like Fryday himself, were careful to give direction for 'my bodye to be buried and to lye in the brotherhood ile' (170). In death they were not divided. Their tombs are scattered now; their ordinances lost; their brotherhood house in Bancroft has long since been delivered into the hands of the despoiler; a joint-stock bank stands triumphantly upon its site (xix). Yet these masters and wardens and brothers and

xviii. Blackstone, in his *Commentaries*, book iii, c. 4, says: 'The lowest, and at the same time the most expeditious, court of justice known to the law of England is the court of *pied-poudre*, *curia pedis pulverizati*: so called from the dusty feet of the suitors; or, according to Sir Edward Coke, because justice is done there as speedily as the dust can fall from the foot.'

xix. To be accurate, on a portion only. Above the shops numbered 1 and 2 in Bancroft can still be seen a part of the open-timbered roof, now ceiled, of the hall of the brotherhood, which once measured 48 feet by 17 feet. Those trusses of the roof which remain in position are of oak and have moulded wall-posts with moulded capitals and bases, wall-plates and purlins, cambered tie-beams and queen-posts, with carved spandrel pieces and wind-braces (1. *m.*).

sisters, with religion as a bond and fellowship as a rule of life, flourished exceedingly in their time. They were a power in the parish; and in the Church of St. Andrew so esteemed that the apostle, with the meekness that was always his attribute, effaced himself before one greater than himself. At any rate, within fifteen years of the foundation of the fraternity, the church is commonly referred to as the Church of St. Mary (xx).

In the south wall of this chapel, near the east end, a priest's door was provided for the two chaplains of the fraternity. Not unlikely it was used by all the six priests then engaged in the services of the church, for it was just opposite the cross-aisle, or retrochoir, and led on by a convenient way behind the high altar (which then stood one bay forward from the eastern wall) to the vestry in the north chapel.

Passing from one chapel to the other, one may pause to inspect the chancel arcades. Clearly something had been learnt since those in the nave were built. The piers here are opposite one another. The adjustment of arch-moulds to caps, so long striven after by the masons, has been at last attained; whereas in the nave a space is left unoccupied, here the arch-mouldings sit more accommodatingly upon the capitals. The easternmost arch in each arcade is of slightly wider span than the others and is four-centered of two moulded orders, the inner one springing off carved corbels, the outer one continuous with the moulding of the jamb. The remaining arches are two-centered of two moulded orders, and have columns of engaged shafts with foliated capitals and moulded bases (228. 237; 254).

VI

The north chapel, though built immediately after the south and in the same scheme of extension, has several distinctive features (228. 238–244; 254). The roof is almost of the same design but flatter, and there are thirteen panels in the length instead of eleven. There is no trace of colour here, though John Pulter, whose wife had 'made pictures' upon the roof of the south chapel, in 1485 made a bequest 'to the paynting

xx. Much the same thing has occurred at the church of Watton-at-Stone, some ten miles away, but there, instead of St. Andrew being superseded, the dedication to him was continued conjointly with that to St. Mary. The church there is still known as the Church of St. Andrew and St. Mary.

of the Ile of the north side of the parish church' (170). One is led to think, too, that the builders were running short of stone. The corbels to the principals are all of wood, not of stone as in the south chapel, and there is no stone cornice under the wall-plates (xxi). What little stone they had to spare for decorative work was devoted to hood-mouldings for the windows. In the south chapel these adorn the westernmost windows only; here they are wrought over all. In both chapels the two westernmost windows just referred to are more closely spaced than the others, and, by the insertion of five windows in opposition to the four bays of the arcades, both chapels display the same disregard of what the nuns had done in the planning out of the chancel. Set like jewels within the traceried head of the five-light east window of this north chapel, glimmers all that is left of the medieval glass that once glorified the whole of this many-windowed church. Some of these pieces appear to rest where they were originally laid in the quatrefoiled openings of the stone tracery; but not a few have suffered from a releading, which was done with little or no regard for their relative positions (xxii). These fragments of translucent colour are all that remain to suggest, however faintly, what the full effect must have been. There are several heads of saints and angels to be seen, each in its nimbus, with stars and clouds and tiny leaves attendant; and shedding its radiance over this lovely work there is that yellow stain, obtained from silver, that is so characteristic of fifteenth-century glass (47. February 24, 1912).

The north windows of this chapel were once illuminated with paintings of St. John, St. Peter, and a third whose description in Dunnage's manuscript enables us to identify him as St. Blaize, the patron-saint of wool-combers and wool-staplers (28. 85). Of all the saints one would expect to find him reverenced amongst the wool-merchants of Hitchin. By him they lived and moved and had their being (xxiii). It was the

xxi. The oak wall-plates on which the roof-principals rested lasted out four centuries, and were then replaced by a continuous belt of cement concrete, reinforced by steel rods bedded in the heart of it.

xxii. Those who did this haphazard sort of work were well enough pleased with it, nevertheless; they have scratched their names on separate quarries with a diamond, lest the fame of such excellent craftsmen should perish: 'Joseph Baker, glazier, 29th August, 1827; George Maxwell, glazier, August 29th, 1827' (47. February 24, 1912).

xxiii. The Papworths, of whom several are buried in the chapel, are known to have continued in trade as wool-staplers from 1350 to 1825 (31. 40).

effigy of ' good Bishop Blaize ' they were accustomed to carry every May Day through the length and breadth of the town. And there is a tradition that the tall panelled recess in the south-east pier of this chapel, which has puzzled so many architects, once held a jewelled banner in his honour, for use in the processions of the church (228. 240).

The hood-moulds of these northern windows terminate in heads, which may or may not be portraits of those who founded the chapel; but those beside the east window, more carefully finished and wearing crowns, undoubtedly represent Edward IV, whose mother from 1460 to 1495 was lady of the manor, and Elizabeth, his Queen. Another detail which serves to date the chapel is the drop-handle of the charnel door, which has four small ' hearts ' attached to it—the *rebus* of James Herte, who was vicar from 1474 to 1498 (244). The same device appears on his brass, which now lies at the entrance into the south chapel (236). The doorway into the charnel-house, which the casual visitor so rarely sees, is of admirable design, with four-centered arched head contained within a square moulding. One spandrel is carved with a squirrel and oak, the other with an angel and vine (228. 242). There should also be noticed in this chapel a piscina with credence under the east window; it is the only one remaining in the church and is remarkable for its smallness and shallowness. Between the two west windows an aumbry was provided for the vestry, which formerly stood, enclosed with panelling, in that corner (210). Screens were provided also to separate the chapel from the chancel, but here, as in the south chapel, these have lost their cornice and cresting, and the two westernmost their folding doors.

Beholding this new creation at the east end of the church, the men of Hitchin must have seen that it was very good—so good, indeed, that the nave, of which their fathers had aforetime boasted, now in comparison seemed dingy, depressing and dull. The people that sat in darkness saw a great light. These new-fashioned storeyed windows with their traceries widespread were marvellous in their eyes. The rays that streamed through them, many-coloured and yet so mellow, came so discreetly into the holy place and mingled so graciously with the tranquil monotone of the priest—a plenitude yet such a peacefulness of light. Truly ' the light is sweet and a pleasant thing.' Why should not they, the common people, have their part of the

church full of christened sunlight and canopied with the hovering host of angels just as much as the high and mighty people in the chancel where they sat? Piety as well as emulation urged them on. God was no idol of wood and stone, the work of men's hands; but it was known that He took pleasure in the perfection of such things; and it had been taught of old that those who bestowed their substance or their craftsmen's skill upon their mother-church might look to have their sins remitted.

Once these medieval workmen had resolved upon a matter, they made no tarrying. They had not only hearts to inspire but heads to contrive and hands to execute. Whilst York and Lancaster fought out their bloody broils and almost unbuilt the kingdom, they quietly built on. The Battles of St. Albans and Barnet raged but a few parishes away, and some Hitchin bowmen were there slain, but the house of God meant infinitely more to them than the houses of Lancaster and York (xxiv). Through the rest of the century, accordingly, they went about their business of bringing the nave up to date. First of all, the windows, and all the buttresses but one, of the nave aisles were remodelled, giving them the appearance of fifteenth-century work, though the thickness of the walls, and the string-course under the sills of the north aisle, and the north doorway itself, and the sturdy buttress beside it, still speak of the earlier time (228. 258). One may suppose that the windows of the south aisle were first undertaken, for they are more of a shape in the head with those of the chancel than are the north-aisle windows, which show a rather later type of four-centered arch. For the delight and instruction of the faithful, the north-aisle windows were painted with the Three Christian Graces, the Four Cardinal Virtues (xxv) and the Beatitudes (10. 164). No record survives of the paintings on the south. The west window of the tower was inserted about the same time. In this there is less space between the mullions than elsewhere in the church, a modification apparently devised to give an effect of distance when viewed

xxiv. This needs some qualification. Over two hundred Hitchin men were engaged in the insurrection of 1453, described in the previous chapter, pp. 40, 41, and amongst them was John Hasylwode, a mason.

xxv. Salmon, with a characteristic sneer at posterity, comments thus: 'The titles are set over each; not perhaps for want of painting good enough, but lest there should come an age in which their Hieroglyphics may not be intelligible' (10 164).

from the interior, and of size in the tower when seen from both inside and out (254).

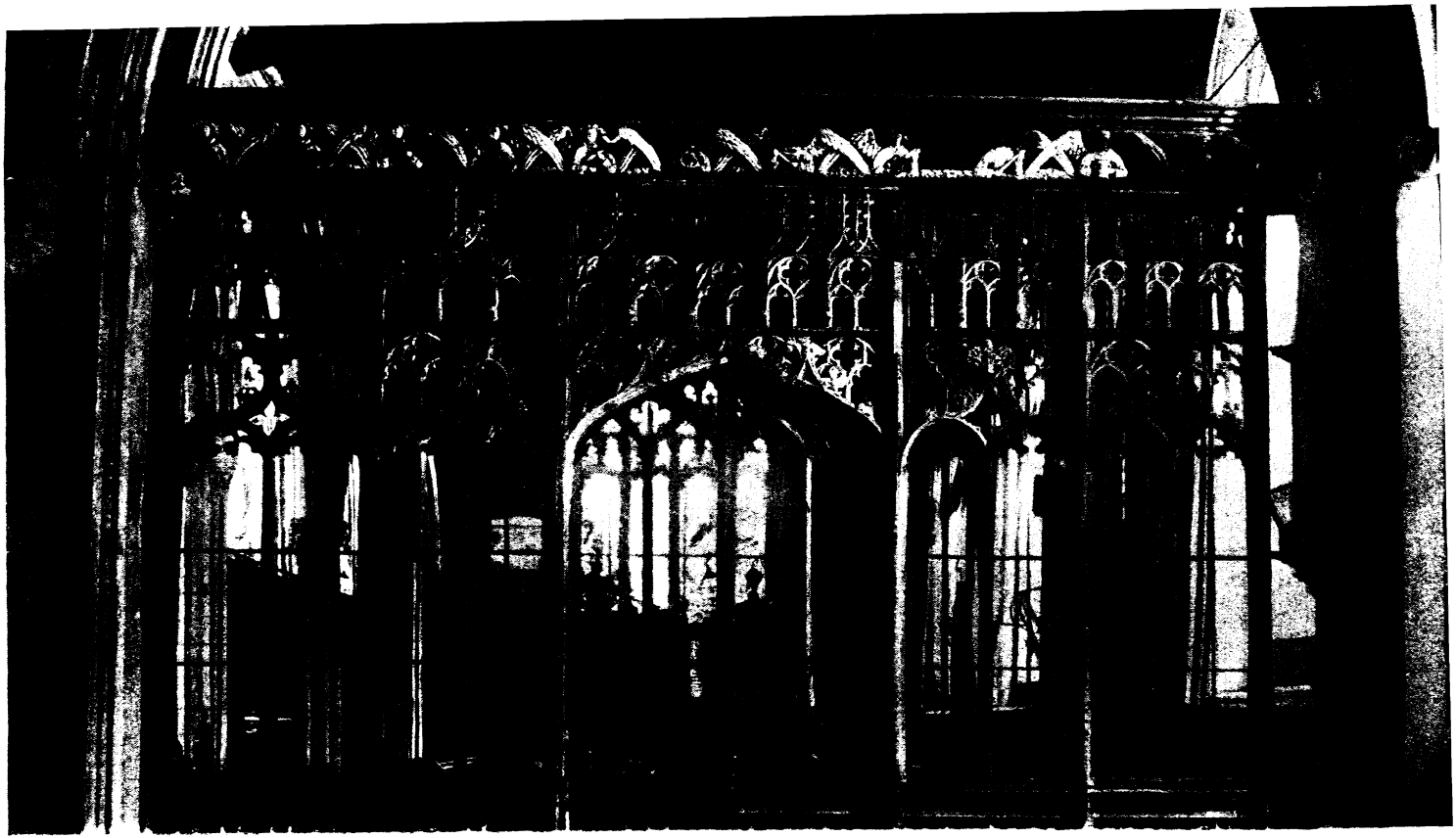
VII

In addition to the aisle windows, the roofing also was renewed. That of the fourteenth-century chancel which the nuns had discarded filled out the eastern portion only of the north aisle; the remainder was made to match, but after a plainer fashion (225. 16 & 17). The south aisle was covered with massive timbers, having carved wood bosses of heads, foliage and shields; and the braces to the tie-beams were supported on stone corbels (228–230). Most of the angel-corbels in the north aisle carry instruments of music, especially in that part which had once stood above the choir; but those in the south aisle have no such harmony. Merchants and kings and queens look down in their pride upon the mob of the laity. There is a woman scouring a kitchen pot and a man supping out of a bowl; there is an angel instructing a young woman, who seems to listen devoutly enough with one ear, whilst a demon, whom the angel, intent on his ministrations, does not see, creeps up her back and whispers into the other (228. 230).

Those who adzed and chiselled these aisle roofs, were they the same artificers who carved the screens at their ends; or for this more intricate piece of craftsmanship was some cunning workman sought from afar? One stands before them and is dumb as in the presence of a master. You may take the pen of an architect and coolly catalogue their several ogees, cusped trefoils, foliated spandrels, cinquefoiled lights, embattled mouldings and carved groinings, but no amount of technical description will suffice. These screens have to be seen if they are to be believed (225. 13; 240; 241).

The screen dividing the north aisle from the chapel has its door out of centre—there are three bays to the north and two to the south—but as the arch is out of the middle of the aisle (xxvi), this arrangement brings the door fairly central with

xxvi. Mr. Geoffry Lucas writes: 'The arch to the chapel not being central with the aisle is apparently intentional, so as to allow of a wooden step-ladder to the rood-loft leading up to the stone steps through the wall. I am inclined to think this rood-loft existed before the arch was made; and so this corner was already occupied by a ladder, thus fixing the space available for the arch and throwing it out of the centre of the aisle. If this was so, the blocked-up openings through the nave wall have been remodelled, as they are of fifteenth-century character.'



THE ANGEL SCREEN AT ST. MARY'S

both aisle and chapel. The screen at the end of the south aisle is known as the Angel Screen. Its tracery carving and tabernacle work are exceedingly elaborate; and its cornice contains a beautiful frieze of twelve angels with intercrossed wings issuing from clouds and holding emblems of the Passion. The angels are of the reign of Henry VI, and have the two styles of hair-dressing—you might suitably call them late-decorated and early-perpendicular—of the period. Half-hidden in the clouds are some curious little figures, probably representing the Creation (225. 13).

The next work to be put in hand, if one may judge from its appearance, was the north porch, a plain structure of two storeys, to which the doorway made in the north aisle in the previous century gave convenient access. Inside the porch, beneath a pointed recess in the west wall, a holy-water stoop was placed, and stone seats on either side. The upper chamber is reached by a polygonal stair-turret, which opens into the aisle by a door with a four-centered head. It has always been said that this chamber was used by the brothers of the gild, and that the iron-bound chest, evidently put together within the chamber, contained their treasure and their funeral trappings (228. 250).

The south porch, added towards the close of the century, is incomparably finer; it is perhaps the chief glory of the church. Owing to the decay of its clunch and the blurring of its outline in Georgian days by a heavy casing of cement, there has had to be much renewal in recent years, but this has been so well and truly done that much of the beauty and proportion of the original work has been preserved (xxvii). The entrance arch of this elaborate two-storeyed structure is of two-shafted orders, the inner four-centered and the outer square, with tracery in the spandrels. On each side of the doorway is a niche. In all probability the one contained an image of St. Andrew and the other an image of St. Mary. Below these niches are cusped panels enclosing shields, one charged with a merchant's mark

xxvii. The restoration was made possible through the benefaction of a former curate, the Rev. E. G. Robson. Joining the Navy as a chaplain shortly after the outbreak of the Great War, he made a will on board the *Aboukir* just before she went down in October 1914. By this will he bequeathed £1,000 to the vicar and churchwardens of St. Mary for the repair of the church. Robson was drowned with most of his shipmates, but the attesting witness to whom he had given the will was fortunately saved.

probably that of the donor, the other most improperly with the arms of Trinity College, Cambridge, which, though subsequently the patron of the living, was not founded until sixty years after the porch was finished. A string-course marks the level of the upper storey, which is ornamented with panels and has two niches on each side of a small three-light window. In the parapet, above a second string-course, there is a carved stone representing the Holy Trinity. It consists of three crowned figures seated on a throne amid rays of glory; beneath are two smaller figures kneeling on faldstools, the donor and his wife. At the south-east and south-west angles, pairs of gabled buttresses run in two stages up to the level of the upper-string. In the cusped heads of the upper portions, which are panelled, there are figures of angels with scrolls bearing the letter 'M.' They give a clue to the donor's name, which is believed to be Nicholas Mattock. Above the buttresses, again, are pinnacles with crockets and finials and trefoiled panels on the outer faces. The ceiling of the ground storey is elaborately vaulted with moulded ribs and wall-shafts. At the junction of the ribs there are carved bosses representing, *inter alia*, a pelican tearing open its breast and feeding its young with its own blood (xxviii), a sow with a litter of six pigs, three coats-of-arms too badly defaced to read, and the figure of our Lord in glory, with His feet resting upon the earth and supported by angels carrying instruments of music. In each side wall there are two traceried windows of three lights. The south doorway is of one design and date with the porch, its jambs and its arch spread out to the shafts and arch of the vault with no plain wall between them. Originally the ceiling was coloured. The

xxviii. Known in heraldry as 'the pelican in her piety,' and often used as a symbol of the Atonement and the Resurrection. In his *Commentary on Psalm cii, 5*, St. Augustine refers to the fable: 'The males of these birds are wont to kill their young by blows of their beaks, and then to bewail their death for the space of three days. At length, however, the female inflicts a severe wound on herself and, letting her blood flow over the dead ones, brings them to life again.' In the *Inferno*, pt. xxv, 112, Dante speaks of Christ as 'our Pelican.' Perhaps the most famous example of the Pelican metaphor is to be found in St. Thomas Aquinas's hymn:—

'*Adoro te devote*
Pelicane pie, Jesu Domine,'

which in the English translation in ordinary use is altered into 'O thou Fount of Mercy,' etc.

carved bosses were yellow, the flat surfaces and curves were scarlet, and the shafts of the archways and the fillets of the mouldings were dark brown. The chamber above the ground storey contains a fireplace and a squint, and has been used successively as a chantry-priest's lodging, a schoolroom, a vestry, a muniment-room and a museum for the church. The plain chamfered arched doorway that leads to it from the south aisle is apparently fourteenth-century work, and suggests an earlier porch and upper chamber than the ones we see (228. 248 ; 79. 15 ; 76. 118).

VIII

With the erection of these two porches the parish church of St. Andrew had attained nearly the full measure of its possible development. Had the sixteenth century proved more propitious, possibly the nave aisles would have been extended westwards as at Grantham, so as to be flush with the west end of the church. But we may be thankful this was not done. The fine effect of a free-standing tower would have been destroyed ; and, if an engaged tower at the west end is ever tolerable, it is only where it is sufficiently lofty to afford the loss of its base. Here the effect would have been grotesque. In details, however, there was still much to do. The nave was still to have a clerestory of rather insignificant proportions, hardly forcing itself into view over the lofty and spacious aisles. The parapets had yet to be embattled and a Hertfordshire spike clapped rather incongruously on to the tower (xxix). Finally, there was the furnishing and beautifying of the fabric. The uncommonly beautiful font, with the apostles under elaborate ogee canopies, with crockets and finials, figured upon its twelve sides, was probably wrought at this time, or a little earlier, and is thought to be of Caen stone (225. 15). A pulpit—the existing pulpit but with a canopy above—was affixed one pier west of its present position, and seats provided near it for the women and for those men who were rich enough to afford them. The

xxix. Mr. Walter Millard observes : ' In the existing nave parapets are found embedded a series of wrought stones upside-down, clearly portions of cusped window heads. These suggest a clerestory of earlier date than can be assigned to the present row of windows with uncusped heads. These latter cannot well be earlier in date than the sixteenth century, if indeed they are of pre-Reformation date at all.'

women were relegated, as was usual, to the cold north side of the nave (xxx).

It is in the wills of the period that the beautifying of the church is best observed; for often, along with the accustomed gifts 'to the reparaciones of the church' and 'for tythes witholden or negligently forgotten,' there are specific bequests which make it possible, if only sufficient wills are studied, to forget the whited sepulchre of the church as it is to-day and reclothe it with its ancient splendour. Assuredly there was once a time when 'they garnished the house with precious stones for beauty,' when it could be truly said that 'the king's daughter (i.e. the church) is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold' (xxxi). Edmund Browne, for example, by his will, dated 1499 (xxxii), gives 'to the light of the Holy Trinity, one pound of wax; to the light of St. Katharine, vi^{d}.' James Tydye, 1517, gives 'to the light of Seynt John the Baptist, ii bushells of malte.' John Wyytt, 1527, gives 'to the torches, xii^{d}.' John Pulter, 1485, gives 'to the sustentacion of the light being afore the Crucifix, 6^{s}. 8^{d}.,' his 'grayle and processionary' also, and money to buy another grayle (xxxiii) and processionary when these are used and done with. Thomas Hadstoke, 1455, gives 'to the Crucifix light in the Roode Loft, xx^{d}.,' and expresses a wish 'to be buried in the Hycchen Church *in deambulatorio in australi parte*'—in the south side of the ambulatory. William Papworth, 1520, gives 'to the gilding of the rood loft a quarter of malt.' Agnes Lyndesey,

xxx. It is commonly said in books of ecclesiology that the women were segregated in the south part of the church, and that the reason for making the doorways on the north side was that the men might enter that way and go straight to their seats. I am inclined, however, to think that the evidence from the early churchwarden accounts points in another direction; and this is certainly confirmed by such *graffiti* as I have been fortunate enough to find relating to women's seats. In the adjoining church of Stevenage, for example, scratched on one of the northern piers, are the words, '*Hic Helen Sedet*'—'Here Helen sits.'

xxxi. See 2 Chron. iii, 6; Ps. xlv, 13.

xxxii. The references to this will and to the wills that follow are given under No. 170 of the Bibliography and in the order in which they appear.

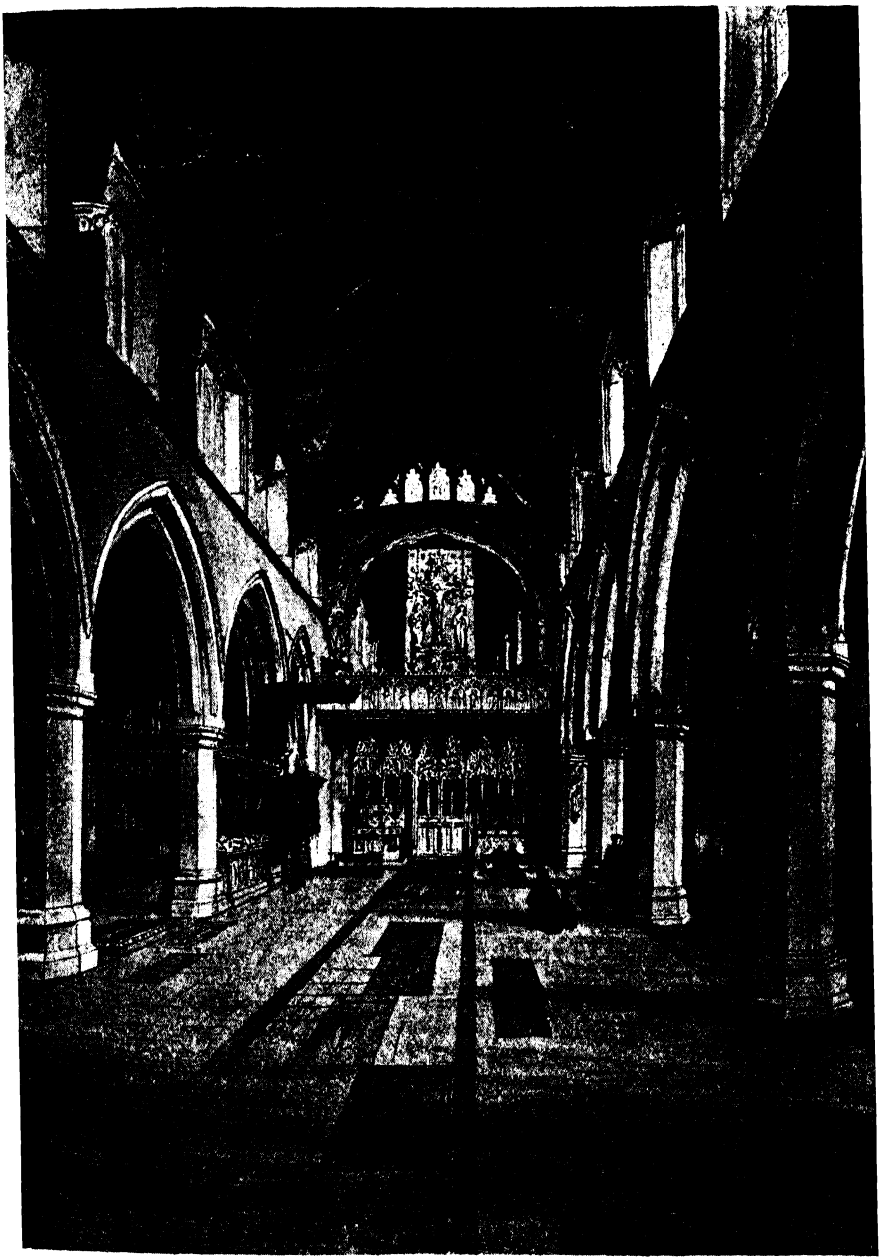
xxxiii. Gradual or Grayle. A sentence in the Communion Office sung after the Epistle. But the term in its usual signification not only includes the sentence called the Gradual, but all the other parts of the office of the Holy Eucharist which were sung, viz. Asperges, Introit, Kyrie Eleison, Gloria in Excelsis, Hallelujah, Tract, Sequence, Creed, Offertory, Sanctus, Agnus Dei. The name indicates that some of these were chanted from the steps of the chancel.

1464, bequeaths 3s. 4d. 'to the greate window in the chapel of St. Edmund.' Valentine Hawys, 1485, gives 'to the werks of the church, xii^{d}.' James Cheetham, 1523, gives 'for a layer of stone, xlvi^{s}. viii^{d}.' John Rogers, 1506, wishes 'to be buried before the ymage of our Lady stondying in the south aisle of the parissche church of Seynt Andrew.' Robert Marshall, 1554, wishes 'to be buried before the morowe messe aultere.' William Chambers, 1519, bequeaths 20s. 'to the meyntenying of Saint George in the same church,' and 'towards the augmentacion of the Rode light half a quarter of malt.' Laurence Bertlott, 1470, provides 'a cloth of silk or damask as shall cost X marks to hange aboute the Sepulcure in the parish church of Hucchyn at the fest of Pasch to Goddis worship.' John Leslay, 1508, gives 'to the Sepulchre Light, vi^{d}.' Thomas Wynch, 1530, gives as much as 'viii^{l}. [about £150 of our money[for a coope [cope] of redde velvette.' Agnes Hemynge, 1533, gives 'to the brotherhede my best dyapere table cloth, to be used and occupied alwayes at the pleasure of all the rulers of the said brotherhede.' Edward Trycotte, 1540, gives 'to the reparacion of the bells, vi^{s}. viii^{d}.'; John Rolfe, 1556, 'to the making of the great Bell to be payd when it is cast, xl^{s}.'; John Lawe, 1558, 'to the casting of the bells, vi^{s}. viii^{d}.'; Elizabeth Fryday, 1558, 'to the shotynge of the bells, iii^{s}. iiij^{d}.'

Sir John Sturgeon, 1492, directs his executors to sell his malt, cows and sheep, and out of the proceeds to purchase 'for the parisshe church of Hicchin a suyte of vestments of cloth of gold.' Nor is he unmindful of the church services either: '*Item* I bequeath unto a cunnyng man every year playing at organns in the church at the masse of Jesu, 40s.—*Item* I will that Thomas Braine, mercer, which at myne instance and request came from Shitlington into Hitchin there to dwell, to the entent that he shold syng in the quire there and helpe to meynteine Goddis service, shall have of myne executors yearly, during the terme of twenty yeres after my decease, for a rewarde to singe and rede in the parish church of Hicchin aforesaid, so that Goddis service may be the better supported and kept, 6s. 8d.—*Item* I will that those two children syngars in the saide churche, whom I have kepte by a certaine season at my costes shal be kepte there with my goodes by myne executors, as well in clothing as in finding with mete and drynke, by the space of three yeres next ensueing after my decese. And that my

said executors shall give unto the same two children competent rewardes.' And furthermore, out of £400 owing to him by Richard Godfrey, for which debt the Abbess and Convent of Elstow were bound, Sturgeon provides for 'two secular prestes hable men and of good and sad [i.e. sober] conversation and guydyng to sing in the parisshe churche of Hicchin, at the Autre behind the high autre there, every day a requiem for my soul and for that of the noble and victorious Prince King Edward IV, by whose service I have had my poor substance which God hath lent me.'

These extracts from Hitchin wills might be multiplied tenfold; but enough has been cited to lend colour and corroboration to the following sketch of St. Mary's in pre-Reformation days. 'It is interesting,' writes Mr. Geoffry Lucas, 'to conjure up in imagination how glorious the view of the church from the west end must have been in its prime. High overhead the solemn rood, richly carved and coloured, with its attendant figures of St. Mary and St. John the Divine; perhaps an enriched portion of the ceiling above it, or a sumptuous hanging behind the cross. Then the rood-loft, with its ornamented and painted front, and bearing its cressets and lights before the crucifix; having also possibly at either end a six-winged cherubim or a St. Michael and St. George, and perhaps containing its "pair of organs." Then the enriched soffit of the loft, a perfect network of beauty, and the delicately traceried heads of the divisions of the screen proper, with scarcely perceptible ironwork in the openings; and in the centre its folding doors. On either hand a saint's altar, rich in fabrics and jewelled ornaments; on the floor, brasses commemorating rich merchants and citizens, who had been lavish benefactors to their parish church, are clustered round the entrance to the choir. Well in view at the ends of the aisles are screens, which, although not competing with the central one, are still of great beauty, and useful in drawing out the veil of mystery to the limits of vision. Then comes the soft jewelled light of stained and painted windows, vivid presentations of Christian story and character, with the whole brought into tone by the sombre shade of the massive oak roofs. Beyond is a shimmer of altars and metal furniture, the sheen of rich fabrics, the glow of colour work, and the glitter of glass. In front, against the pillar, is the delicately carved and coloured pulpit; overhead its canopy



THE NAVE OF ST. MARY'S, LOOKING EAST, IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

From a drawing composed by Geoffry Lucas from descriptions in contemporary documents

ornamented with gilded cresting and supported by wrought ironwork from the wall. Lofty, scarce poised on the ground, the pulpit appears like a celestial chariot. Near by, in the nave are wide, low benches for the townsmen's wives, maybe adorned with armorial bearings and crests or with the familiar merchants' marks or poppy heads, extending only so far as the eastern-most column and leaving a good wide alley down the centre of the church. All round are objects of beauty in glass, screens, images, altars, tombs, coloured ornamentation and wall decoration, hanging lamps and lights and altar furniture, fit pendants to the rood screen, which itself is only a grand frontispiece to the high altar beyond, the heart of the whole' (228. 229).

IX

A little while and much of this splendour was to be lost for ever in what one of our Hitchin priests extravagantly called 'the martyrdom of the church of St. Mary.' In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 the vicarage of Hitchin with the chapel of Minsden had been returned at £25 6s. 8d. per annum (xxxiv) (174). Four years later, on August 26, 1539, the Lady Elizabeth Boyvill, Abbess of the Abbey of the Blessed Mary of Elstow, was made to say that she 'freely and willingly gave and granted' *inter alia* the Rectory of Hitchin 'to the most illustrious and victorious Prince and Lord Henry VIII' (174. *a*.). In 1547 it was bestowed upon the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, which the King had founded the year before; and is held by them to this day (176). The endowments of innumerable testators for the everlasting remembrance of their names in 'obites, annyversaries and lyghtes' were plundered the same year, and a survey made of the chantries and the brotherhood 'to the end that all amounts soever which could be realized might be brought into the king's empty treasury and that all adjuncts of the papal superstition might be suppressed.' In 1548 all the 'londes, possessyons and hereditamentis' of the Fraternity, including the Brotherhood house,

xxxiv. At the time of the clerical subsidy twelve years previously, 1523, the then vicar, Leventhorpe, 'says on his conscience that it is not worth more than sixteen pounds. Therefrom he pays the Abbess of Elenstowe a pension of 52s. 4d. Also he pays to Sir Robert Malton, celebrating and ministering in the chapel of Mynesden annexed to the church of Hychyn, 40s.'

the house known as the Swan and two other tenements, thirty acres of land, five stallages in the Hitchin market-place, and the profits of the two fairs were, along with the property of the gild at Luton, sold to Ralph Burgh and Robert Beverley for £1,036 14s. 4d. (177). The 'goodes and implements appurtenynge to the said Fraternitie' realized £4 3s. 3d.; but the 'plate, juelles and ornamentes' brought to the King's 'empty treasury' *nil* (178). It is evident that these were removed before Sir Henry Parker (xxxv) and the nine other Commissioners arrived—a very pardonable concealment on the part of the brethren, but done, as it would seem, without the consent of the Master and Wardens, who held the key; for the face-plate and lock of their chest show clear signs of having been forced by a chisel or a bar (xxxvi). There is a hollow space, as I have found from tapping, in one of the pillars of the nave, not far from the entrance to the Brotherhood chamber; and it is evident that the masonry has at some time been replaced. Is this possibly where the Brethren secreted their plate and ornaments and jewels? One would dearly like to know. Should any sinful reader ask for more precise information on this point, he will be disappointed, for the author is not disposed to assist anyone but himself to commit this sacrilege. Those who are inclined may more honestly assist the author by hunting for the Fraternity seal, which, says Richard Gough in a MS. note, *circa* 1780, in a copy of Salmon's *Hertfordshire*, 'was once in Mr. Bristow's collection and is now at Strawberry Hill' (10).

In 1552 'the Chauntery House situate within the churchyard of Hytchyn' was seized and sold to one Thomas Stevens for £210 (179. *a*). On the first day of June that same year, Sir John Butler, Sir John Brockett, John Penn and Nicholas Bristowe,

xxxv. Eighth Baron Morley, Gentleman Usher to the King and one of the first followers of the new learning. It was he who in 1536 had sent Thomas Cromwell a copy of Machiavelli's *Prince* with a letter recommending Machiavelli's views to Cromwell's notice, and directing his attention to passages which dealt with the position of the Papacy in Europe. If Cardinal Pole's memory is to be trusted, however, Cromwell possessed, and offered to lend him, a manuscript copy of the 'Satanic' work some years before it was printed. In a conversation they had together in 1529, Cromwell advised Pole to give up his old-fashioned studies and read a book by an ingenious modern author who took a practical view of government and did not dream like Plato. Pole said he preferred not to read such a book (217. 4).

xxxvi. The damage was such that the lock was considered to be past repair; a large staple was then driven immediately below the broken lock, a strong hasp attached to the lid, and the whole secured by a padlock.

another set of Commissioners, appeared 'to take and receyve a due full and juste viewe of all the goodes, plate jewells and ornaments,' not of the chantries, but of the church as a whole (179). On this occasion, also, there was an attempt to hide away things, especially one very sacred possession, a little image of Christ upon the Cross, which the people before the Reformation (xxxvii) had been accustomed to kiss after Mass was ended at the Ceremony of the Pax or Kiss of Peace; but, alas! that was quickly discovered. The Commissioners made a clean sweep of everything they could find, and delivered into the hands of Sir Francis Jobson, Master and Treasurer of the Kinges Majesties jewells, as much as two thousand and three ounces of precious metal, 'whereof in gylte plate eyght hundredthe foore skore and eyghtene ounces, in parcell gylte eyghte hundredthe ounces, and in whyte plate thre hundredthe and fyve ounces. And also a pax of silver *imbesylled* from the churche aforesaid' (180). Five months later (November 1, 1552) they paid a further visit to the church and made another considerable haul of stuff, which had probably been brought back into use in the meantime. The second inventory, which has been printed in full by Cussans in his *History of Hertfordshire*, vol. iii, p. 75, enumerates a 'crosse of silver parcell gilte with an iron barre in it weighing 40 ozs.'; four 'chalices of silver and gilte weighing from twelve to twenty-eyght ozs.'; a 'pixe (xxxviii) of silver gilte with a pece of christall in it weighing together nineteen ozs.'; a 'Crysmatorye (i.e. a little vessel for the oil used in holy baptism) of silver parcell gilte with Robissh in it weighing seventeen ozs.'; four 'suits of copes in triplicate for priest, deacon and subdeacon,

xxxvii. And for some while after; for a custom so endeared to the common people was not easily reformed away. As late as 1611 our Hitchin poet, George Chapman, gives to quarrelsome folk the wholesome advice, 'Kiss the Pax and be quiet like your neighbours.' It did not always avail as a bringer of peace, as may be seen from a curious incident at Theydon Garnon. There, on November 4, 1522, after the elevation of the host, the parish clerk presented the Pax to Mr. Hempton, lord of the manor and patron of the living, and to Margery his wife, and then to Mr. John Browne, who took it, kissed it, and then broke it in two pieces over the clerk's head, causing streams of blood to flow. On the previous Sunday Browne had said, 'Clerke, if hereafter thou givest not me the pax first, I shall breke it on thy hedd.'

xxxviii. The shrine in which the consecrated host was preserved. The student should be mindful not to confuse the 'pix' with the 'pax,' though he may be relieved to know that the lexicographer, Dr. Johnson, fell into the trap.

in blue, green, red and black velvet' respectively, the blue one 'wanting a pece thereof,' the green 'rent by est[imation] one yerd,' the black 'very old'; a 'ffaucon of leatyn,' which probably signifies a lectern-eagle of latten or mixed metal; and 'VI great bells in the steple,' varying from four feet five inches to two feet three inches in breadth, and 'an lytil Bell' (i.e. a sanctus bell) 'containing in depth XVI ynches in bredth XVII ynches' (xxxix). These spoils of the war between Church and State were delivered into the unsanctified hands of Francis Barley and John Alwaye, of Kimpton, 'safely to kepe the same untill such time as the kynge majestie's pleasure shal be further knowen.' The rest is silence, broken only by the scandalous complaint of Henry Ashton, the vicar of Hitchin in Queen Mary's day, that one of the chalices which he might be using was being made to serve for a tankard in the alehouse of Susan Auncell, of Kimpton; and that the black velvet cope was now upon the back of her tapster (53. 5).

X

Thus was the Church of St. Mary laid waste and desolate, its altars profaned, its beauty all defiled. Here as elsewhere was brought to pass that terrible saying out of Holy Writ which the Lollards had for so long been applying by way of prophecy against the opulence and splendour of the Church: 'Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness. I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings that they may behold thee' (Ezekiel xxviii, 17). It was not merely a matter of deprivation. The Church that emerged from the ordeal differed not in outward and visible form only, but in its very being. It could never hope to be the same again. The continuity of church life, its hours and offices, its ancient liturgy, its chain of prayers that linked the Catholic world together—in a word, all the 'fair humanities of old religion' that had existed here with such little change for close on six hundred years—was suddenly rent in twain. What Edward the Confessor had begun may be said to have ended with Edward the Suppressor.

xxxix. In all probability the bells were made by the Dyer family, who were bell-founders in Hitchin throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The decline of church-life was all too soon apparent. 'Within the parish of Hitchin,' it had been reported in 1548, 'there be above a thousand people that receive the blessed communion' (177). A little while and you find one of our ablest vicars recording with some pride that he has as many as 195 communicants on Christmas Day. In the Episcopal Visitations you may trace a corresponding reduction in the number of those who serve in the church. In 1523, for example, there are as many as nine priests, though one of them, Sir William Auger (xl), is but 'an old man and weak with infirmities' (173. 105). In 1540 there are seven (173. 61). In 1543 the vicar, Henry Malette, is reported as 'non-resident—absent at Northiam in Sussex.' The 'cantarist, Sir Thomas Crossdale, is likewise absent.' There are but four resident clergy to serve the church, and one of these is unpaid (173. 16. *d*). In 1552 'there is only the curate besides the Fraternity priest' (178).

It is clear, too, that difficult times were coming. The presentments grow more frequent of such as 'speaketh wordes savouring of heresy,' or 'commonly goeth out of churche before the service or sermon be ended,' or 'keepeth drinkinge and company upon the Sundaye' (7). The sense of decency and reverence was being lost. The wardens complain to the archdeacon that the congregation is no better than 'a crowd of common chatterers' for ever 'laying of wagers, janglinge and prating in the churche in the tyme of devine service' (3. 4). The archdeacon and the bishop are continually reprimanding and exacting penance from those who behave *indecenter et irreligiose*. The godly were constantly being rewarded with the spectacle of the ungodly clad in white sheets after the manner of humble penitents, proceeding on bare legs and feet (*nudis tibiis et pedibus*) to the high altar, there to ask pardon of God on bended knees. '1609. Paid the Paritor for his atendance upon Rebecca Parmeter hir pennance, 1s. and to Joan Talboy for use of a sheet, 6d.' (3. 6). The conduct of the decent and religious may have been supported by such examples as these, but, what with Brownists and Anabaptists and the 'Prophesyings of Phanatique Gospellers' on every side, there

xl. The priests of the period styled themselves in Latin *Dominus*, in English 'Sir.' In the stone of the pier supporting the arch leading into the Radcliffe Chapel can still be traced the faintly scratched signature of 'Dominus Humphrey [Cotton],' who was vicar from 1530–37.

was need of precept also to confirm their faith. In the old days it had been thought sufficient 'once a quarter to expound to the people, without any fantastic texture of subtlety, the Fourteen Articles of the Faith, the Ten Commandments, the Two Evengelical Precepts of Charity, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins with their Progeny, the Seven Chief Virtues, and the Seven Sacraments of Grace' (xli). Now almost every Sunday the archdeacon was urging them to expound the new Catechism to their people, not from the pulpit but 'standing in the stalls,' or one of the new-fangled homilies 'to stay such errors as are by ignorant preachers sparkled among the people.' If any 'preachment' were vouchsafed, it was to be delivered not by 'the inferior sort of Ministers,' but from such an one as had been duly licensed, e.g. Andrew Willett, of Barley, a select or public preacher who in the reign of James I was frequently invited here. 'He taught,' so his biographer records, 'after a most familiar way, affecting a plain phrase and humble style, applying himself to the capacity of his hearers; reputing that sermon best adorned that was least set out with human learning and eloquence, or perplexed with curious questions that help not to heavenwards' (217. 6). Along with the new opinions and practices, the world also had crept into the Church. There is a constant coming and going of parish officers. There is always some fresh burden of the State to be shouldered by the Church that had become its very humble servant. Surveyors had been appointed in 1555 and overseers in 1597, but in reality the administration of highways and poor relief fell for another century at least upon the wardens. In the first instance, they had to interview those who thought themselves 'qualified to practise physicke and Chirurgery' (194); those wise women who brought testimonials to show that they had 'practised as a midwife for several years with very good sucksess,' and asked to be licensed for the same (191); those wise men who judged themselves competent to keep a school. There were bargains to be driven with the steward of the Rectory Manor who proposed to hold courts in the church, and with those staplers who wished to store wool in the tower. More often than of old the business of the market-place drifted into the church, contracts were signed and debts were made

xli. Wilkins's *Concilia*, 'Of the Instruction of the Simple,' vol. ii, p. 54.

payable there. In 1617, for example, John Chapman, an elder brother of the poet, borrows £100 from Edward Harolde and covenants to pay interest on a day specified 'in the southe porche of the parishe church of Hitchin' (184). A few years later and the vicar himself, Francis Bragge, is found erecting a brew-house by the church gates and planting hops on his glebe (259. 6).

XI

There was a marked increase, also, in the purely ecclesiastical business, for about this time the registry of the archdeaconry of Huntingdon was moved to Hitchin. By the light of its records one is able to peer into the private lives of the parsons, not only of Hitchin but of all the parishes round about (7). One hears them grumbling about the weekly exercise required of them in Latin, and about having to provide the licensed preachers with dinner and horse-meat, and about having to pay an outlandish tax for the planting of Virginia. One also hears the archdeacon grumbling against them in his turn: they *will* 'clothe themselves indecently for men of their calling'; they are, some of them, 'of questionable life and conversation'; they will not see that 'the word is painfully and profitably preached,' or the children 'diligently catechized.' There are papers which concern the laity as well. 'Thomas Papworth, Gent,' an inhabitant and parishioner of Hitchin, comes before the Commissary and says that he and his wife Dorothy 'are oftentimes much straitened for seate roome in the severall [i.e. separate] seates they now sit in, soe that they cannot, with that decency that is fitting and the church requires, perform the duties incumbent on them in time of divine service.' Thereupon a faculty is granted for the assignment of a further 'pewage' of eight feet two inches and a half 'opening into the middle alley' (189). In the same way Ralph Radcliffe, 1607, is given leave for himself, his heirs and posterity, 'to sit, pray and genuflect at divine mysteries celebrated in the church of Hitchin in the first seat or great pew on the south side in the middle area or middle ambulatory' (2. 12). In another parchment of 1631, one finds his brother, Sir Edward Radcliffe, who had been King James's physician, genuflecting before Archbishop Abbot and praying for some remission from the Lenten fasting. The Archbishop,

sympathetically 'perceiving that the eating of fish would be detrimental to your bodily health, doth hereby permitt and allow you and also your wife and your children, with whatsoever others you may choose to harbour with you and invite to your table, to feed on flesh meats any day or time publicly forbidden during your natural life. You are nevertheless enjoined to eat soberly and frugally, cautiously and advisedly, and, to avoid public scandal, privily and not openly, nor is other victual permitted you on account of ill health than is above expressly admitted' (2. 13). For this dispensation the beloved physician had to pay only 'six shillings and eight pence yearly into the chest for poor brethren of your parish.'

In a licence of 1614 may be discovered the origin of those texts on the wall which for two hundred and fifty years were to disfigure not only this Church of St. Mary but all the churches of the land; it is the licence of Archbishop Abbot to 'John Sergent of Hytchen, Paynter-stayner, to survey and paynte in all the churches and chappells within this realm of England the Kinges Majesties armes in due forme with helme, crest, mantell and supporters as they ought to be, and to wrighte in fayre text-letters the tenn commandments, the beliefe, and the Lord's Prayer, with some other fruitefull and profitable sentences of holye Scrypture.'

In another paper, dated 1638, one has a glimpse of the vicarage-house of that day (186). 'Item a Vickaridge house,' runs the terrier that describes it, 'with a Hall, a greate Parlor with two chambers over it: a Kitchen with a chamber over it: a little Parlor with a chamber over it: a Studie, a Buttrie, a court yard, a wood house, and a gardin place' (xlii). Of any repair to the vicarage or to the church during the eighteenth century there is no trace in these papers or elsewhere. It was trouble enough to keep the congregation in order, without thinking of the church. And, quite apart from any question of repair, it looked at one time as though the church might not be allowed to stand; for Samuel Chidley, a Fifth-Monarchy

xlii. Though much altered and partially rebuilt, this old vicarage still survives in the house on the south side of the church (No. 10, Market Square), the approach to which is under a timbered gateway into the courtyard referred to in the terrier. In the eighteenth century Mark Hildesley, vicar (1731–55), wanting more accommodation for his pupils, got leave to substitute as a vicarage a house nearly opposite, in the churchyard path. This was sold in 1925 and the present vicarage built the following year.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY FROM THE NORTH SIDE

From a painting by J. C. Buckler, 1832

man, who had made himself Lord of Hitchin Manor in the time of the Commonwealth, 1653, was vehemently opposed to these 'diabolicall institutions.' 'It is contrary to the word of God,' he told Cromwell and the House of Commons, 'that such high places should be built, rebuilt and repaired, or that any man should contribute the least thing to the payment thereof, or plead for them, or worship in them.' The 'steeple-house of superstition' at Hitchin particularly offended him by its size and splendour. 'The more costly these idols be,' he remarked, 'and the more beauty and bravery they have, the more dangerous they are. They ought to be quite plucked downe, and utterly demolished, and never to be had in remembrance any more.' Most luckily it was he who was plucked down, and there had been only time to do a little spiteful damage to images and windows and tombs. 'The Font,' says Salmon, referring to this time, 'hath the twelve apostles round it, but they have been assaulted and battered by those that exceeded them in pretence of sanctity' (10. 164).

XII

Then came the crowning mercy of the Restoration. The church was rescued from the hands of such men as Samuel Chidley. The Public Lecturers appointed by the Assembly of Divines, who had been holding forth now in the market-place and now in St. Mary's, were dismissed to the privacy of their own conventicles. After eleven years' suppression, the Book of Common Prayer was heard once again in the land. But to the few sober minds who watched the course of things it became clear—once the uproarious bells had ceased to clang—that not everything was going to be restored. It was a rather singed and frightened church, in fact, that emerged from the ordeal of fire. It no longer seemed to embrace and speak for the parish as a whole. The Puritan—or rather the Protestant—emphasis on the individual soul, as one little chapel all to itself in the great cathedral of humanity, in personal communion with the Divine without priestly intercession, and directly responsible for itself to its Maker, had for a hundred years been undermining the authority, and almost destroyed the corporate life, of the Church. What had once been an undivided family of folk was now splitting asunder into a number of incompatible parts.

Along with this there was a determination on the part of those who had suffered from the discomforts of the late unhappy times, not only to make themselves comfortable all the rest of their days, but to make their State religion a thing of comfort, too. Weary of enthusiasts, they were resolved upon a safe and middle course. If it were to be a choice between two evils—having too much religion and having too little—they knew now which to avoid (xliii). There is not much to record, therefore, in the Georgian or dead season of the church. The services were almost as meagre as before. The minister, as he was called, never went to the Holy Table except on 'Sacrament Sunday' once a month, and then the elements were placed there, not by the priest as required by the rubric, but by the clerk before Morning Prayer. There were sermons now in plenty, but those that have been printed of vicars Bragge, Hildesley and Morgan make one sigh for the practical wisdom of the Homilies and the liveliness of the Lecturers. There was a revival of church music also, but, as Bishop Porteous feelingly describes, 'it is generally engrossed by a select band of singers, who have been taught by some itinerant master to sing in the worst manner a most wretched set of psalm-tunes in two or three parts, so complex, so difficult, and so void of all true harmony, that it is altogether impossible for any of the congregation to take part with them' (200). 'With a view to establish an early habit among the lower classes of attending church,' a Sunday school was instituted towards the end of the century by Dr. Niblock, master of the Free School, and Isaac Newton. It met, not at St. Mary's, but in a room at Barnard's Yard in Dead Street, and was cordially approved and supported by the upper classes. Once in a while the bishop of the immense diocese of Lincoln would come round to confirm

xliii. Canon C. W. Foster observes on this: 'You do not sufficiently recognize the high level of church life in the time of Queen Anne, and the efforts then made to correct abuses.' But in that very period at Hitchin we had as our vicar Francis Bragge, who, having failed first as a barrister and then as a poet, had been advised to secure a living in the Church. Finding the work uncongenial, he delegated most of his duties and did pleasanter things instead. When his wife died in 1710, he removed to the peaceful and healthy village of Much Wymondley. Year after year he was presented to the archdeacon, and occasionally to the bishop, as 'non-resident'; but he refused to budge. It was enough, he said, that he kept a poor curate to run the parish for him (259). To speak of the high level of Church life in Bragge's vicariate is out of the question, even for the amiable author of this book. An account of this vicar will appear in *Hitchin Worthies*.

the children ; and would mark the occasion, as one right reverend did, by presenting a copy of Duncan's *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* to each innocent and probably illiterate child (3. 7).

As for St. Mary's itself, it suffered worse mishandling from its friends throughout the ' churchwarden ' period than from its avowed enemies in the age of the Puritans. ' A love of order, seemliness and good taste,' according to Dean Inge, ' has led the Anglican Church along a middle path, between what a seventeenth-century divine has called " the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttery of fanatic conventicles." ' In the eighteenth century, however, this seemliness and good taste is not easily perceived. The Dean may have had some warrant for his words in the cathedrals ; but ruridecanal observers, at any rate, are apt to find more rocks of offence in the *via media* than in either of the two extremes. The strait and narrow way seems to have led only to destruction. It was then, for example, that they made away with our magnificent chancel screen. William Dunnage, who was at the time, 1776, engaged upon his History of Hitchin, cried out against them in the words of the Psalmist : ' With axes and hammers have they destroyed the carved work thereof ' ; but no one seemed to mind. It disturbed the view from one of their galleries, and was not their comfort more to be regarded than this old-fangled piece of wood ? It was then they painted the side screens and the font a vivid green. It was then they covered with low plaster ceilings the glorious medieval roofs. It was then they erected the high box-pews in which comfortable Christians could doze away the ' World-without-end hour,' like Hogarth's *Sleeping Congregation.* Money that had been given to pious uses they spent, in 1754, ' to make the face of the lion in the Royal arms look like our king George II,' which, as Dunnage seditiously remarks, ' was hardly fair to so noble a beast as the lion.' They laid out another twenty shillings for a black sentry-box, from which, in wet weather, the Minister read the burial service, whilst the mourners stood bare-headed in the rain. The three galleries that cumbered the church, built in 1745, 1776 and 1821 respectively, were no expense to the wardens ; all the money was subscribed beforehand by those who had been allotted seats (193 & 203). At the west end of the nave there were two of these galleries, adorned with mahogany fronts and supported by two elegant pillars of the

Corinthian order. As a final touch of distinction, the arms of King Offa (xliv), which had been found nailed to the roof of the nave, were varnished and emblazoned on the mahogany (28. 83).

For some years the Upper Gallery was used by the instrumentalists and singers, but their conduct seemed to decline in so lofty a position, and their seats had to be assigned to the Free School boys and the girls of the Charity School. Once a year each of the girls was provided with a blue frock, a white cap and a tippet. On the following Sunday, after service, they were made to come down from the gallery and stand on forms along the middle aisle of the nave, so that their patrons as they rose from their sittings might see how effectively their money had been spent (260). The gallery over the south aisle was the last to be erected. In construction it was far less costly and imposing than the others—instead of Corinthian columns there were pillars of cast iron—but, being closer to the choir and facing the pulpit, it was rated socially much above the others, 'a place to seat Tories, the churchiest of the churchy.' There was a most unchristian endeavour to snap up the eighteen pews it contained. The wardens were distracted, for it was thought that the seats should be allotted in strict order of social rank. Any simpleton could draw the line between esquires, gentry and professionals; but it needed more than a wise man's son to determine the niceties of precedence between a tallow-chandler and a butcher, and no one had any idea where the Officers of the Excise could claim to sit (203).

XIII

Respecters of persons and respecters of their own personal comfort though the wardens were, they showed little respect for the church itself. Throughout the eighteenth century you will hardly find a trace of serious repair. The chancel roof and the rain-water heads of lead against the chancel clerestory are of this period; and so are the two treble bells, which, when the other six were recast in 1762, were added to make up the

xliv. Three golden crowns upon a shield of red. An early example of attributed arms, i.e. arms posthumously conferred upon men of eminence and skill in war, who, unfortunately for themselves, had lived before the true heraldic era. That the church here should honour the name and the arms of Offa was only right, for, apart from the fact that he was its founder, he is believed to have introduced the payment of tithes into England.

octave (219). But for the most part the wardens consulted their own ease, and put a sublime faith in posterity. They thought that we, at any rate, would be free of the wars in which they were always entangled. When the fruits of their folly grew too apparent, they daubed the whole structure with Roman cement, and trusted in Providence to keep the whole together. For many years now we have been laboriously stripping the church of this disfigurement, and are beginning to measure the extent of the bill we were left to pay. Most of the nineteenth century and much of the present has been spent in making good the neglect of the three centuries that went before. From 1827 onwards the work of repair has been almost continuous. First under Sir Gilbert Scott, then under Sir Arthur Blomfield, and lastly under Mr. Walter Millard, the galleries have been removed and the faculty and family pews displaced by oaken benches. The ceilings have been cast out and the ancient roofs restored. The chancel has been provided with a new roof of pitch-pine cased in oak, the eighteenth-century hipped roof being left *in situ* above it (xlv). The clunch here, there and everywhere has been refaced or renewed. All the windows have been reglazed, and in six of them painted glass has been inserted in memory of the families of Hawkins (xlvi) and Delmé-Radcliffe, and of those who fell in the Great War. A new organ by Walker has been placed in the north chapel and recently reconstructed. The bells have been re-hung and a ringers' gallery erected (xlvii). The reredos of stone and

xlv. It is a curious experience, and one that well repays the labour and the dust, to drop down through a trap-door in the leads into the space between the two roofs and walk right along. There is room enough to stand upright and examine with the aid of a torch such timbers of the fifteenth century as remain. You can do the same in the space over the roof of the north aisle of the nave, but that is more constricted.

xlvi. It is hard to believe it, but the figure of St. Stephen in the window so named in the Radcliffe Chapel, dedicated to the memory of Mary Hawkins, was designed by Sir Edward Poynter, R.A. A well-known townswoman who took pleasure in pointing out to visitors the church's many interesting features, used to account for the inelegant tracery, distinctly suggestive of bottles, of the west window of the tower, dedicated to Dr. Frederick Hawkins, by saying that it was emblematic of the deceased's profession.

xlvii. In 1881 the Ancient Society of College Youths, with William Allen, their Hitchin member, rang at St. Mary's a complete peal of 5,040 changes of Grandsire Triples in three hours and sixteen minutes. In 1904 the same peal was rung in seven minutes less. A third attempt in 1906 occasioned William Allen's death.

mosaic by Signor Capello perpetuates the name of Oswald Foster, the Gothic canopy of the font that of Francis Lucas. The Trinity Chapel has been refitted for worship in memory of Thomas Perkins, for twenty-seven years vicar's warden. The tower has been redeemed from destruction and re-established with much of its former ruggedness and strength as a general thanksgiving for the fifty years' vicariate (xlviii) of Lewis Hensley (202, 207, 210, 211, 213, 216, 223, 237, 258).

All these things have been done, and more also. There have been no dissenting voices, no obstructions this time on the part of the 'Satellites of Satan.' As many as were of a free heart, to borrow a phrase from the Bible, have offered themselves and their substance willingly; for once again there has risen up in the spirit of men and women something of the adoration which went to the making of churches such as this. To many good people the life of the parish is still centered here. It is the one place which in their transitory world stands as it did of old—a place where for forty generations the tribal family of Hicca has forgathered to do homage to its Heavenly Father; a place of prayer and contemplation purifying the soul of man; a place, to quote our own poet Chapman, 'that sweetens human thoughts like Paradise.' Each faithful servant, out of the fullness of his heart and after his own fashion, has done what he could, and has known how to consecrate his thankoffering, in all humility, to the glory of God: 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.'

XIV

There remain to be considered several matters of detail over which it was not convenient to pause in the swift and summary narrative just concluded. The registers, for example (4), which begin in 1562, deserve more than the customary casual notice—demand, indeed, a student's keen attention (xlix). In

xlviii. Being left in the obscurity of the vulgate, the verse chosen by Dr. Butler, Master of Trinity, from Hebrews xiii. 7, for the memorial to Canon Hensley is not sufficiently appreciated for the aptness of its choice: 'Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.'

xlix. An able account of these has been compiled by the late Mr. H. F. Hatch, and printed, together with a transcript of the earlier marriages, in the *Transactions* of the East Herts Archæological Society, vol. vii, part i, pp. 8–50; and continued by Reginald L. Hine in part ii, pp. 83–104.

their pages one may gravely and profitably study the rise and fall of families, the havoc of plague and civil war, the whims and oddities of nomenclature, the occupations and immoralities of the people, the peculiarities of incumbents, the carelessness of scribes, the quiet and deadly working of the worm, hiding both man and his records from the disinterring eye of the parish chronicler. You can grieve to see the rich and flourishing family of Monk gradually decline from their timbered mansions in Bancroft into the Dead Street slums. You can shudder to see whole families wiped out in a month and huddled together in a common grave. You may come with delight and refreshment upon such names as Katherine Jolleyfellow, Greediana Tarboys, Affabell Battell. You may read here the sorrowful, universal tale of lunatics and suicides, and the sudden death of strangers within the parish bounds. You may stumble across queer descriptions of the dead, e.g. Father Grave, 1565; William Rowe, Paralyticus, 1617; Old Jones, the Dishman, 1669; and you can smile at the delicate distinction of class, shown in the choice of the word 'buried' for the common people and 'interred' for those of rank. Whatever God might be, the clergy were ever respecters of persons; in the midst of death—the great leveller—you find them still deferring to those of high degree: 'Buried Thomas Eversale, Tinker, 1705: Interred Sir Jno. Barrington, Barinett, 1717: Buried Semack, a Blackamoor servant of Edward Radcliffe, Esquire 1727: Interred my Lady Radcliffe 1719.'

From these registers, which were kept none too well, and from 1653–65 not at all, we may pass on to consider the plate, which, though of no great age, has been kept very well (221). There are two patens: one unmarked and undated but *circa* 1615, 'the gift of Anne Chapman, widow of John Chapman, late rector of Willian'; the other dated 1625–26, maker's mark, a monogram composed of the letters T and F in a plain shield, 'the gift of Mr. Thomas Weals deceased.' There is an alms dish, dated 1635–36, maker unknown, 'the gift of Dorothie Hill, Widdow, 1635, to the parish church of Hitchinge for receivinge the offeringe at the Communion Table.' There is a pair of cups and covers, dated 1705–6, Britannia Standard, maker Benjamin Pyne, a celebrated goldsmith and plate-worker living in St. Martin's-le-Grand, donor's name unknown. And finally there is a pair of flagons, dated the same year, Britannia

Standard, maker Humphrey Payne, said to have been given by Dame Mary Radcliffe. Together they weigh nearly 83 ozs., or more than half the 150 ozs. of plate now surviving. The inventory of plate in 1552, it will be remembered, showed a total of 2,260 ozs. (179).

Of the tombs, brasses and mural tablets a few have been noted already. It would be tedious to make a full catalogue of them, and besides it has been done already imperfectly but painfully enough by the historians of the county. 'I think it not impertinent,' said Chauncy, the earliest of them, writing in 1700, 'to add the inscriptions upon Monuments and grave-stones, as I found them (tho' many of them have been either originally in false Latin, or some of the letters being defaced by devouring time now appear so); these being memorials of our once flourishing ancestors, designed to perpetuate their Remembrance to future Ages, and of no despicable Use to Heralds in tracing Pedigrees or Lawyers in making out Titles to Estates' (8. xvii). Certainly he was justified of his pious and practical wisdom, for, since his day, time (l) has devoured half the relics he recorded :—

> 'Wonder not, Mortal, at thy quick decay—
> See! Men of Marble piece-meal melt away;
> When whose the image we no longer Read,
> But monuments themselves memorials need.'

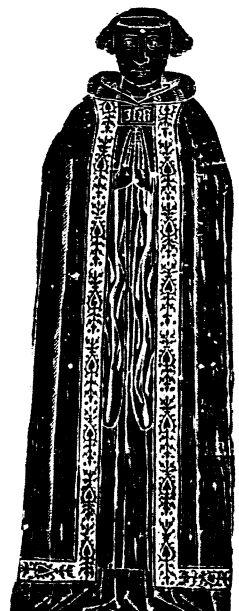
These lines of parson Crabbe give one a tempting opportunity, but it would be equally tedious to inflict upon the unprepared reader any of those 'Mortuary Reflections' which weigh down the pages of my predecessor Dunnage (28. 165). It would be something worse to imitate the necrological exactitude of Isaac James, who actually descended into the vault to find out whether Sir Charles Farnaby Radcliffe's coffin did in fact measure three feet seven inches across. In his day the good knight had filled many of the hungry with good things; his own corpulence might have been allowed to rest in peace.

l. It is hardly fair to put all the blame on 'time,' for man has been far more destructive. In the repairs of 1827 the workmen carried on a lively trade with the dealers in old metal, and no one seemed to mind. In the neighbouring church of Luton the churchwardens themselves were brazen enough to melt down a great number of brasses and form the 'branch' or chandelier that now hangs in that church. May God have mercy on their souls!

ELIZABETH MATTOCK

THOMAS ABBOT

JOANNA ABBOT



JAMES HERT

From the original rubbings in the library of the Society of Antiquaries made by the Rev. Herbert Haines, author of *A Manual of Monumental Brasses*, 1861

XV

There is an oppression of mortality here amongst these tombs and monuments. The air seems laden with the dust of centuries, and the clinging memories of men not yet ascended into the oblivion of immortality. We need only stay to point out those of most consequence amongst this congregation of the dead. First and foremost for its antiquity and historical associations is the westernmost of those three effigies which lie in the window-sills of the north aisle. Sculptured in Purbeck marble of the thirteenth century, it represents a knight in mail hauberk, with coif, mail chausses and a long surcoat. The left arm is hidden beneath a kite-shaped shield, suspended from a wide guige which passes over the right shoulder. A belt, girded a little above the hips, once supported a sword, worn on the right side, but of this only a fragment remains (218). There is a tradition in the parish, which one after another the county historians have approved, that this forlorn, dismembered figure was brought here from Temple Dinsley when the Preceptory of the Templars was demolished, and that it represents their founder, Bernard de Baliol (*fl.* 1135–67), sometime lord of Hitchin Manor, the builder of Barnard's Castle, the champion of the Battle of the Standard, the captive of Lincoln Field (li). Half-hidden by the organ in the north chapel is a slab with an incised marginal inscription in Norman French to Sir Robert de Kendale, who became lord of Hitchin Manor at the time when the Templars were suppressed, 1309, (228. 243). A redoubtable man in his day, he had borne arms against Robert Bruce and, as Warden of the Cinque Ports for many years, had put the fear of his name into the freebooters and pirates who infested the English Channel. Two centuries later, when his family had died out, this tomb of his was plundered by another family which in its turn had risen to eminence. In the centre of the slab a brass plate was fixed bearing this inscription: 'Here lyeth William Pulter late of Hitchin who dyed ye 23 daye of Maye Anno 1549.' Two centuries more and the family of Pulter had run its course. As though designed for a satire

li. This tradition has been confirmed, if not established, of recent years by the discovery at Temple Dinsley of the foot of a mailed figure in Purbeck which not only matches with but fits on to the mutilated figure in the north aisle (47. February 7, 1903).

on human greatness, the very next slab, which commemorated another William Pulter and proudly emblazoned his arms, was appropriated in 1756 by the plebeian family of Ewesdin (288. 244). As formidable in his lifetime, and as despitefully used in his death, was Sir Edward de Kendale, son of Sir Robert, whose effigy, side by side with that of Elizabeth, his wife, once rested upon an altar tomb, but now lies divorced from hers upon a window-sill. His head rests upon his helmet; his hands are clasped in prayer; a lion guards his everlasting sleep. From her effigy, on the next window-sill, you may learn to a nicety the costume of a lady of quality in the days of Edward III. The hair is confined within a tightly fitting cap, surrounded by a coronet of metal inlaid with precious stones. She wears a close-fitting jacket coming half-way down the hips—it is trimmed with a border of beads; a plain skirt falls in graceful folds to the ground; over all is an ample cloak, like that of a hospital nurse; at her feet crouch two pug-dogs with bell-collars, who seem to growl at one's approach (228. 234).

On the other side of the church, in the privacy of their own chapel (formerly the chapel of the Hitchin Fraternity, but re-dedicated, as has been spitefully said, to the glory of the Radcliffe family), repose twelve generations of the Radcliffes of Hitchin Priory (31. 43–5). There sleeps, all too soon at the age of forty, Ralph Radcliffe (1519–59), first of his line, a poor scholar of Jesus College, on whom Henry VIII, out of regard for his family and his own merit, used to bestow an occasional sustentation of ten shillings. Though he 'claimed but a lowly place in regard to learning,' and published none of the many works that he composed (lii), he was by no means destitute of scholarship. In 1542, for example, he was the only one who stood up to Sir John Cheke, Professor of the Greek Tongue, then newly introduced at Cambridge, in his attempt to impose a reformed method for its pronunciation. 'Jeered and exploded at by the collegians, hissed and tossed about in the crowd, so as thereby to cause a riot in the university,' he obstinately held his ground and at length prevailed upon the Chancellor, Bishop Gardiner, to put a stop to Cheke's new-fangled ways. After Radcliffe went

lii. 'When I exhorted him,' says Bishop Bale, 'to have them printed, he answered, "I will follow the advice of Marcus Fabius Quintilianus and of Horatius in his *De Arte Poetica*, who advises a man not to be too hasty in editing of his works, but to put this off to the ninth year."' By a cruel chance he died just before the eldest child of his brain attained that age

down, it is said, 'there was peace, quiet and silence amongst the youth of Cambridge.' Apparently, it was at the King's suggestion that Radcliffe came to open school at Hitchin Priory as soon as the Carmelites had left. 'He took the greatest delight,' says Pitseus, 'in the education and instruction of boys.' Moreover, he taught them after a method all his own. 'What pleased me most of all,' says Bale, 'was the playhouse which he had constructed in the cloister. Each year he was wont to present his agreeable and reputable plays there to the public view, so that the youths committed to his charge might overcome the curse of shyness and transform their puerile and stammering utterance into precise, elegant and well-enunciated speech.' It was not only the Hitchin world that flocked to see these plays; courtiers were drawn from London and dons from Cambridge. Radcliffe's reputation grew apace, and with the increase of his pupils he was enabled each term to buy another field or two of the Priory estate (217. 5; 252. 1–30).

XVI

Dying in 1559, Radcliffe bequeathed his 'vyle corps to be buryed when god's pleasure shall be to take me out of thys world and vale of Mysery, in such wyse and sort as Chrystian men are buryed according to the laudable orders of the church' (252. 31). He left three sons behind—Ralph, Edward and Jeremy, the first two of whom were in due time laid to sleep with their father in this chapel. Being very familiar with Roger Ascham, that most particular of schoolmasters, 'who disdained intimacy with dunces,' Ralph had entrusted him with his promising son and heir. In 'a letter of kindly greeting to his friend Ralph Radcliffe,' Ascham reports upon the young hopeful's studies, and incidentally shows his own affection for the lad: 'Dearest Radcliffe, our own Ralph, for he has now become a treasure shared by us both, has all through shown that his one aim has been to carry out your wishes and come up to your expectations. He has learnt very accurately the proper shape, suitable connections, and right order of all the letters and has daily practised himself to get a perfect knowledge of the meaning and force of every letter in every one of its positions. In this he has made such progress that not only must we look for hope of success and endeavour to obtain it, but even ripeness and perfection. . . .

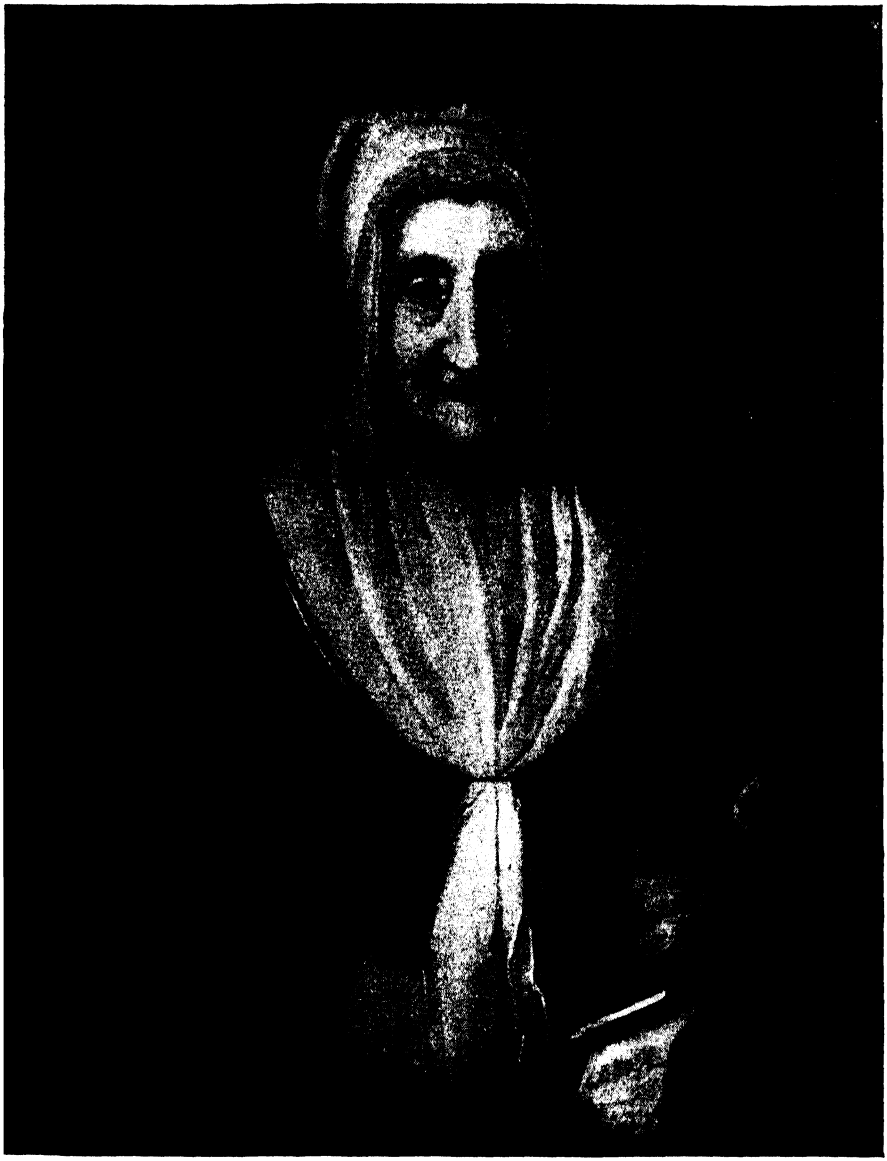
I began by loving Ralph for your sake, and now I dearly love him for his own worth, for in the boy there is such ability, such modesty, and uprightness of character that we cannot think too highly of him. And so I heartily congratulate you on having such a son, and him on having such a father. But I will say more at length about this matter when I come to your house (liii), where I hope to be about Palm Sunday, unless some public business or other interferes with the carrying out of my purpose. Most steadfast of my friends, greet from me your most excellent wife, my most sweet boy Jeremiah and my dearest brother John H. together with the rest of your household and most of all that honest man the under-teacher' (252. 33). Though he became a double reader in the law and enriched himself with chamber-practice and land-dealing (liv), Ralph the Younger hardly lived up to the promise of his youth. He was loyal and moneyed enough to contribute £20 to the State fund for fighting the Armada, and man enough to get on a horse himself and join the Queen's bodyguard at Tilbury (252. 34; 31. 43). He won some reputation also as a man of taste. There are some pleasing verses extant, which he wrote in a copy of Verstegan's *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* whilst on a visit to Antwerp in the year of its publication. From Rubens's studio in the same city he is said to have purchased the picture known as *The Adoration of the Magi*, now used as an altar-piece in the Trinity Chapel (lv). It was left to his brothers, however, to make more stir in the world. Edward, after a training in medicine at Orleans, was appointed Physician to James I and knighted by him in 1604. Jeremy ('my most sweet boy Jeremiah'), after a brilliant career at Cambridge, was made vice-master of his college, Trinity, and had the honour of translating a part of the Apocrypha for the Authorized Version of 1611 (252. 35).

Ralph the Younger, dying without issue in 1621, was succeeded by his brother Edward's son—another Edward, who, with a Puritan wife in a town packed with Parliamentary soldiers, led an uneasy life as a Royalist throughout the Civil War. He

liii. He had only fourteen miles to ride. The letter is undated, but it may be referred to the time when Ascham was tutor and secretary to the princess Elizabeth in the old palace at Hatfield.

liv. Amongst his more profitable speculations was a lease of the Scilly Isles, for which he paid the Crown the amusing rent of six hundred puffins by the year.

lv. It was given to the church by his descendant, John Radcliffe, a hundred and fifty years later.



MARY FRANCIS, THE NURSE OF EDWARD RADCLIFFE'S ELEVEN CHILDREN

From a painting by an unknown artist in Hitchin Priory

lingered on to see the Restoration, and then departed in peace, having seen the salvation of his country (349 & 363). He was followed at the Priory by his nephew, another Ralph (252. 37–43 ; 31. 44), who, having helped Charles II with money in his days of exile, was rewarded with a knighthood on his return. To replenish his family exchequer, almost emptied by the Civil War, he turned merchant-adventurer, and ran two successful fleets of trading-vessels, one to The Hague and another to Aleppo. In matrimonial ventures Sir Ralph was no less fortunate. He married and survived three heiresses in turn, and at the age of eighty-two was once more sending out in a shaky hand a ' prop-posall for a match.' His children went in terror of him, as did the Quakers whom he was pleased to persecute, and the parish officers of Hitchin, whom he ruled with a rod of iron. Everyone sighed with relief when at last he condescended to die at the age of eighty-seven. That his proud soul might rest in peace, the family besought a sumptuous monument and set it amongst those of his ancestors in the chapel where he had often been spied pacing to and fro, bowing to everyone in turn. From the crest of it they suspended the helmet, corslet and gauntlets, which, though incredibly out of date and uncalled for in times of peace, he as Lord-Lieutenant had loved to wear. Edward, his son, being almost an old man when he came into the estate, enjoyed it only seven years, and was succeeded in 1727 by another Ralph, who died childless in 1739. The Priory then passed to Ralph's brother, another Edward, who seems with the estate to have inherited his grandfather's spleen, which twenty years' hard labour in the plague spot of Aleppo had done nothing to improve. The inscription on his monument speaks of brotherly affection (31. 45), but in truth his life was one long quarrel with his brothers. The only affection he showed was towards the animal creation (lvi). Out in the East he collected all kinds of

lvi. This needs one qualification. He evidently had a warm regard for his old nurse, a most long-suffering creature, who nursed not only the refractory Edward but ten other brothers and sisters. The portrait of her which Edward commissioned, and which in reproduction fronts this page, is a touching piece of work. There seems a line in her deeply furrowed forehead for every child she reared. Dying at the age of ninety, she was thought worthy to be buried along with the family in the Radcliffe Chapel, and this inscription was cut upon her stone : ' The body of Mary Francis, relict of Thomas Francis of Willian, who was called to be a nurse in the family of Edward Radcliffe Esquire in the year 1680, and had successively the care of 11 of his children, in reward to her faithful services is here deposited. She dyed Nov. 20th, 1732.'

wild beasts—gazelles, antelopes, zebras, yaks and monkeys—and, in spite of constant complaints, insisted upon shipping them home to enliven and protect the Priory park (252. 45–48). After Edward's death without issue, the estate, with its rapidly propagating zoo, passed to his brothers Arthur and Ralph in succession, and then to his nephew, the son of his brother John. The two first named, after seeing the wonders of the East, came back to England with no more spirit in them, and were satisfied to dwell in quiet contemplation of their riches. The nephew, John, on the other hand, spent lavishly what they had saved. Nine thousand pounds, it was said, went to ingratiate the electors of St. Albans, for whom he sat as a member throughout three parliaments (lvii) (252. 51). The restoration of the Priory, 1770–77, under the supervision of the Adam brothers, cost him three times that sum, and when at last it was completed he was mortified to be told by his man of affairs that he could not possibly afford to live there. Until his early death at the age of forty-five in 1783, he was condemned to live narrowly in the dower-house at Highdown (252. 53 & 54). Besides these four, there had been a fifth brother, George, but his name has always been blotted out of the family records, and his remains were not accorded burial in the Radcliffe Chapel. It is a pity he should be quite forgotten. If he proved to be the wickedest of his family he was by far the wittiest. In the London coffee-houses he was able to hold his own with the young sparks of his day, and his *vers de société* were often quoted. Unhappily he lost his heart so often and to so many women that at last he lost his head. Towards the end of his wild career he was under the restraint of Dr. John Lane, the close friend and physician of the family, who, when it came to his turn to swallow 'the unpalatable draught of mortality,' was likewise buried in St. Mary's. Lane himself possessed a pretty wit. He once sent Vicar Hildesley a prescription 'for the internal growth so evident of late in your Sunday Sermons' (252. 55). If anything,

lvii. Sir William Musgrave, writing to the Fourth Earl of Carlisle in 1767, says: 'Lady Frances Howard is gone again into Bedfordshire with Lady Terrington; and they persuade themselves that Mr. Radcliffe will certainly declare before Christmas; when that is done I shall give it credit, but shall think him a bold man to undertake a contested election and a wife in the same year, even with £150,000 in his pocket, which his uncle has just left him.' Musgrave was mistaken. Radcliffe went all out for the double event, and won both his seat and his lady (73. *a*.).

George found his society too stimulating, as may be guessed from these lines which in his last lucid interval he scribbled on the wall beside his bed :—

> ' What use to send for Dr. Lane,
> When you are sick and racked with pain ?
> Though you survive his medicine chests
> You'll die of laughter at his jests ' (252. 56).

With the death of John the male line of the Radcliffes came to an end. The estate passed to Penelope, his sister, and after her death in 1802 to her niece, Anne Milicent Clarke (lviii), who married Emilius Henry Delmé, the boon-companion of George IV (lix). They were known everywhere as the first gentleman and the first gentleman-coachman in Europe. Without Emilius no race-meeting could be called complete, and though he died in as hard times as England has endured, he left a stable of ninety-five horses to be dispersed at Tattersalls' (lx). He left a son also, Frederick Peter Delmé-Radcliffe, who followed the racing traditions of his father, but was of far more service to the community as a pattern squire and a model Master of Hounds. He has ' gone to earth ' now nearly half a century, but folk in Hitchin still praise his kindly ways and genial country wit. As for his treatise on *The Noble Science*, it has by now taken its place as a classic of the hunting field. Francis Augustus, his son, who inherited the estate in 1878, had been a Commander in the Navy, and modestly confessed himself ' at sea upon the land.' But he religiously performed the duties of his earthly calling, and for the rest lived in august retirement—' becalmed,' as he once said, ' upon the river Hiz ' (252. 65). On his death in 1916, the

lviii. Charles John Clarke, the heir presumptive, had perished the year before by the collapse of a platform from which he was viewing the celebrations of the Peace of Amiens. Napoleon, hearing of his accident, sent his own surgeon to attend him, with a message that, as soon as his recovery would admit the presence of a stranger, he would pay him a visit. But he never recovered (31. 3. 22).

lix. The King and he were often at Highdown together to exercise their horses or ride in the point-to-point on Lilley Hoo. On one occasion after a carouse they smashed all the windows of the dining-room by hurling their empty goblets through the panes of glass. After Emilius's death the letters which the King had written to him were destroyed lest the morals of the younger generation should be corrupted if by accident they lit upon them (252. 58–59).

lx. Richard Gough, in a MS. note to a copy of Salmon's history now in the Bodleian, says he was worth £60,000 (10. 162 ; Gough's *Hertfordshire*, 16).

Priory estate passed to his nephew Ralph—the fifth Ralph of his line—who has since carried through a most needful and judicious scheme for the improvement of the mansion (289).

XVII

Some Christian people there are who cannot endure these haughty memorials which human pride has erected over its kindred dust in the holy places of the most humble of all religions. But the general reader will have pardoned this side-study in a side-chapel. It would be a pity, indeed, if those who looked upon the tombs of the Radcliffes should learn nothing from them but their names ; they have, for good or evil, been so intimately concerned with the fortunes and misfortunes of this town. Elsewhere in the church are many other memorials that deserve to be recorded, but we can stay to point out only one or two. Some of them—perhaps the worthiest—are not to be pointed out at all. Who will show us, for example, the resting-place of John Wallis, who died, according to Dunnage, in 1341, at the age of one hundred and nine (28. 99) ? Yet this patriarch was said to have been a most notable benefactor of the church. Who will tell us which corner of the church was set apart for the burial of those wool-staplers of Calais who died here away from their homes (lxi) ? We do venture to point out the altar tomb of Richard Edmunds, 1472, and his wife, with their effigies in winding-sheets (31. 47). We know under which pew to look for the brasses of John Wisebeard, 1486, and his wife, who died together and were buried in one grave (31. 48). Though only the matrix remains, we can spell out the brass of John Sperehawke, once vicar of this church, who died in 1474 (lxii). We call to mind the will which he wrote out ' on the feast of the

lxi. Most likely the south aisle of the nave, for we know that the arms of France were emblazoned on its roof. But see 31. 39.

lxii. Haines, in his *Manual of Monumental Brasses* (p. cxxxii), gives an illustration and a description. Sperehawke, who was also Canon of Wells and a Doctor of Theology, is depicted in a cassock, a chasuble-shaped surplice, a tippet and a pointed pileus. At the foot of the figure could formerly be seen a hawk perched on a spear in punning allusion to the vicar's name. On each side of his head was a heart surmounted by a scroll, and on the scroll these words : *Ubi enim est thesaurus, est et cor tuum* = Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also (236 & 198).

Annunciation' two years before, giving what few shillings he possessed to the fellows of his college, Pembroke, and the priests of St. Mary, and William, the chaplain of the Biggin, to provide for a requiem mass. Nor do we forget the touching confession of faith with which his testament begins: 'I commend my soul to the most august Creator of the heavens, who has redeemed my soul at the inestimable price of His most precious blood, the Ineffable One, whom I have revered in my soul above all else in the world, albeit I have not loved Him with my whole heart as I ought to have done' (P.C.C. 19. Wattys). Closer to our own time there is the epitaph to show of William Papworth, 1707, a pious soul who is said to have tended and interred the victims of the Great Plague of 1665, when neither the doctor nor sexton would come near:—

> 'Here lyes one, that of himself had neither worth nor vigour,
> And was but a cypher, untill Christ became the figure' (197).

Obscurely placed in the south aisle of the nave, and rarely noticed, is the stone of Papworth's counterpart, Captain Robert Hinde, a man in his own esteem of utmost worth and vigour, and to all times memorable as one of the originals of Uncle Toby (250). Captain and historian of the Light Dragoons, he retired after twenty years' service, as he told the War Office of that day, to drill his unruly regiment of boys. With the aid of his batman, Pilgrim, he fortified his house at Preston, renaming it Preston Castle, and emplaced small cannon in strategic positions on Tatmore hills. His farm labourers were summoned to their various tasks with the sound of the bugle, and so dismissed at night. On great days the Captain would put on his uniform and decorations, and ride with his sons and retainers into Hitchin. After a fanfare of trumpets in the market square, he would proclaim to the open-mouthed citizens that 'this is the anniversary of the happy restoration of His Majesty King Charles II,' or of 'the battle of Malplaquet,' or of some other famous victory. A loyal address would follow, ending with 'God Save the King.' Then the trumpets would sound again, and the Preston Light Dragoons would return in glory to their castle. These and a hundred other eccentricities attracted the notice of Lawrence Sterne, who used to stay with Lord Dacre at Kimpton Hoo. Many a time he rode across the fields to inspect the trenches, bastions and ramparts, whilst

the gallant Captain thundered out his theories of military science (lxiii).

These are the great ones of the parish. Their names live on in the storied monuments, the stately hatchments, the cold marble pomp, with which grandeur mourned magnificently over departed pride. Out in the graveyard (and none the less soundly for that) lie sleeping the undistinguished company of the dead who could not afford the privilege of burial within the precincts of the church (lxiv). One of them, indeed, seems to have had a fling on his tombstone at this inequality of mortals here below :—

> 'This world's a city full of crooked streets ;
> Death is the market-place where all men meet.
> If life were merchandise as men could buy,
> The rich would always live, the poor would only die ' (lxv).

As it is, 'one event happeneth to them all.' But 'some there be,' indeed the vast majority, 'which have no memorial who are perished as though they had never been.' You may spell out the names of many Hitchin families on these graveyard stones : Newton, Whittingstall, Paternoster, Joyner, Albon, Times, Perks, Bentley, Nash, Bunyan, Chapman, Moore, Jeeves, Huckle, Dimsey, Kershaw, whose descendants still plough the same fields, sell in the same streets, and kneel at the same altar. But what thousands must lie there, 'tomblesse with no remembrance over them,' who once were 'in love with this green earth,

lxiii. This literary problem will be discussed at more length in the account of the Captain and his literary remains to be included in the companion volume of *Hitchin Worthies*. Meantime one may refer the student to the evidence in a paper entitled 'Traditions of Sterne and Bunyan,' in *Macmillan's Magazine* for July 1873. The probability is that the portrait of Uncle Toby was drawn from several models. There are some traits, no doubt, of Sterne's own father ; something has been borrowed from the Commodore Trunnion of Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle* ; of the rest, much beyond any question is Captain Hinde (250).

lxiv. The charge was 6s. 8d., once a considerable sum ; outside only the half. On a stone outside the west door of Ely could formerly be read this epitaph :—

> 'Here I lies without the door,
> Within the church are many more ;
> Here I lies and have less to pay,
> And I lies just as warm as they.'

lxv. Frequently used as an epitaph. It comes from a ballad to be found in Percy's *Reliques*.

HITCHIN CHURCHYARD ; A WINTER SCENE

the face of town and country, the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets ' !

XVIII

We have yet to mention some unusual matters of detail, which the ordinary wayfaring man would not easily discover for himself, though indeed one might stray into the church every day of one's life and find out something new. On the eastern face of the second pier going eastward, in the chancel, for example, there is a cluster of holes at equal lengths with metal cramps in the lowest. They would set any student guessing, and he might not be far wrong in connecting them either with metal brackets for lamps or the fastenings of the rod which upheld the Lenten Veil. The smaller holes lower down in the piers of the Trinity Chapel show where Erasmus's *Paraphrase* and Jewel's *Apology*, those goodly bulwarks of the Reformation, were formerly kept in chains. Above the chancel arch are to be seen the hooks from which the great crucifix was suspended. In the roof of the charnel-house as one enters is an ancient stone that has been taken from its rightful place in the church and laid face downwards to carry the flooring of the chancel; in the dim light the two effigies in brass gaze down at one in a most perplexing way (228. 242). On the splay of the loop-light, or slit window, as you climb up to the room over the north porch, there is a rude carving, evidently done in medieval times, representing what is known in church symbolism as ' the mystic spectacles.' By the aid of these it was thought the Christian man might look out and behold as in a vision the vast army of his fellow-pilgrims as they travelled through this transitory world on to the Promised Land. In the same position has been outlined the figure of a demon, but one which, curiously enough, has an angel's wings. Cut in the stone, here and there, you may see some interesting names and pieces of old script, by no means easy to decipher (253). In the chamber above the north porch, for example, in bold script of about 1500, is the name of one Tristram, most likely Laurence Tristram, the last warden of the Brotherhood, whose treasure-chest stood there. In the same chamber, but in another hand, someone, perhaps one of the brothers of the gild, has scribbled the word *Corp*[*us*], i.e. Body, as if to remind himself of the promise of

'the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body'; though another word near by, '*Dubito*'='I doubt,' seems to indicate the misgiving of his mind (lxvi). On a pier to the south-east of the chancel arch is incised the name 'Benbury,' which may be that of the select preacher from Cheshunt who in the year 1556 was presented to the Archdeacon for disparaging the worship of the Blessed Virgin Mary in this church of hers at Hitchin. On the arch that leads into the Brotherhood or south chapel could be traced until recently the names of Beverley and Burgh, to whom on dissolution the lands of the Fraternity were assigned. On one of the nave piers, in an early fifteenth-century hand, were to be seen the words *Ecclesia Anglicana Libera sit*—'Let the Church of England be free'—which is the opening clause of *Magna Charta* (lxvii). At the east end of the north aisle of the nave, where once stood an altar to St. Peter, could formerly be deciphered this piteous appeal: 'O Peter, mercy, mercy!' The script has perished, but my rubbing of it happily remains. In the upper stage of the belfry are two sentences written of recent years, which reflect a very troubled and sceptical spirit. One comes upon them with a start. The first is that despairing cry torn from the heart of St. Augustine: 'Lord, if we are deceived, it is by Thee.' The second is more hostile: 'Ye worship ye know not what' (lxviii).

XIX

They are something, these scattered hints of those who wrought and suffered here. But oh! that these walls, these

lxvi. Dr. M. R. James, Provost of Eton, to whom I showed the rubbing of this graffito, was inclined to read the word as not *Dubito* but *Dilto* = *Dilecto*, i.e. 'to the loved, or chosen, one.'

lxvii. This and four other graffiti, including the names of Beverley and Burgh just mentioned, were unhappily obliterated when the piers and walls were cleaned down in 1925. The *Ecclesia Anglicana* inscription is also found in the church at Ashwell, some ten miles away.

lxviii. Curiously enough, I have found the same inscriptions at Stevenage and Datchworth. Sir William St. John Hope, to whom I communicated them, told me he was frequently finding the same sort of thing. There was, he thought, a secret society of latter-day gnostics or sceptics going about the country writing these libels upon the Faith and Doctrine of the Church. You can find libels on the faithful, too. In the upper chamber of the south porch of St. Mary's I found the following, quoted, if I remember aright from Nietzsche, 'The stupidity of the good is unfathomable.'

marble effigies would speak! We end as we began on that same sigh. You may ransack all the records and do all that the wit of man can devise to encompass the history of a church, yet how superficial it all seems; how it still escapes you, this faithful guardian of great memories, this mystery in stone! Were we but more attuned to the soul of time, we might interpret what Ruskin held to be the chief glory of a church like this: 'that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity.' It is to catch this still small voice that men come as of old into this haunt of peace. In the midst of the great congregation they seem to hear it, soaring above the descant of the choir, echoing behind the supplication of the priest. Others it will visit as they sit alone in this house of prayer, of those best prayers that men say without knowing that they say them, the elevations and amplitudes of mind which accord with the spirit of the place. On the night when the ringers practise, there are a few who love to sit in the darkness of the nave, whilst the bells are shedding their coloured music 'with a mellow brightness, a rosy glow of sound'; who love also to linger there when the ringers have departed, when

> 'Silence comes welling back along the nave,
> And empty space again grows cool and grave,
> Washed of the colour of those mingled noises.'

There is one—I who write am he—who has even ventured to keep an all-night vigil in the church, an experience not to be lightly undertaken. In the midnight hour,

> 'God's knocking time; the soul's dumb watch,
> When spirits their fair kindred catch,'

one might expect the graves to open, the mysteries to be unsealed. But the voices recede at one's approach. However softly one may tread, each footfall thunders along the walls and resounds among the sepulchres. There is a fluttering in the air as of shy things slipping back into their places. In a moment there is a quiet more intense than the quiet one had interrupted. One is filled with a sense of shame, as though one had disturbed the communion of the blessed dead, as though the doors of the invisible world had been shut in one's face.

One goes outside to recover in the cool night air. Overhead, the stars that know all things shine on unconcerned. From the gargoyles of the church the demons mock at one. At times they seem to start to life, to hover like vultures in suspended flight, waiting for their prey. How peaceful the town is at this midnight hour! Each living citizen asleep in his little house, whilst in the House of God the dead, as we miscall them, are wideawake. Here at noonday, in the heart of this busy town, you might conceive the church as the work of the hands of men. It has been 'entrusted with their fame and hallowed by their deeds. Its walls have been witnesses of their suffering'; its pillars stand upon their congregated dust. But at the day's end, when the toys of earth's children are laid aside and the darkness falls upon their striving, it is marvellous to see how the little houses nestle closer to the Great House and seem to sleep in its shadow. As one looks upon them so, the thought —nay, the certainty—steals upon the mind that this town in the beginning was not so much the creator as the offspring of the church, and in spite of all its years still loves to cling to her side and be gathered to her arms, the arms of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which once enfolded the Son of God, and which now, in her infinite compassion, are extended to all the sons of men.

HITCHIN PRIORY

From the original painting by Paul Braddon, *circa* 1765

THE PRIORY (i)

I

IF I were emulating Blomville's fourteenth-century manuscript of the Priory, which in the year of Waterloo went to pieces between the clumsy fingers of William Dunnage, Postmaster and Antiquary of this town (28), I should no doubt be led back to the region of pure fable where all Carmelite historians begin. No chronicler of that time would have spared his readers the tale of Elijah, who, ' under the ministry of angels,' was ordained the first monk on that holy mountain with Jonah, Micah and Obadiah for his first disciples. Nor the account of the philosopher Pythagoras, who, according to tradition, disputed on the same mountain with the prophet Daniel for thirty days and thirty nights over what was even then the thorny question of the Trinity. In due course the chroniclers used to touch ground about the year 1150, when Berthold, the Crusader, vowed in the thick of battle that, if he came through alive and caused the infidels to fly, he would serve thenceforth in the invisible army of Christ. After wandering through Calabria, he came in extreme old age to Carmel, where, collecting a few hermits from the hills about, he founded beside the fountain of Elijah his Order of Carmelites. I refrain, as Blomville assuredly would not have done, from setting out the sixteen articles of the Rule which Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, gave to the Order and which, being found too stringent for Western conventual life, were in 1247 relaxed by Innocent IV. I also refrain from the whimsical and adventurous story which tells how two English knights, John de Vesci and Richard de Grey, unearthed a small number of these Carmelite recluses, and

i. Thanks are due to my learned friend, Father Benedict Zimmerman, of the Carmelite Priory, Kensington, the author of *Monumenta Historica Carmelitana*, 1905, for absolving the manuscript of this chapter of its many sins, and for putting the imprimatur of his sound scholarship upon its pages. I wish also to acknowledge the courtesy of Cardinal Gasquet in searching the Vatican Library for the Chapter records and for certain manuscripts of the Hitchin friars.

brought them over land and sea to establish at Hulne, near Alnwick, the first Carmelite priory in our country, 1242 (277).

II

But so far as the Hitchin Carmelites are concerned the first solid footprints of history are placed in the year 1305. From near and far that autumn devout people forgathered to the consecration of our parish church, newly risen like the phœnix from the ruin which fire and hurricane had caused. Amongst them, and most honoured of them all, came Richard Welwen, Provincial of the English Carmelites, a Hertfordshire man who loved our country-side and lingered here for the residue of his days. He died in 1307, and according to Dunnage was buried in the North Chapel of the nave beside the altar of St. Peter (28. 49). There being no Carmelite house within the county, it is thought that he persuaded some of the wealthier sort to found one here at Hitchin. At any rate, within ten years of his death, another Provincial of the Order, John of Berkhampstead, who, seeing that he lived here, might as well have been styled John of Hitchin, obtained the King's leave and the Pope's leave to found some additional friaries in England; and the good work was commenced (288). By that time Edward II was proposing to grant the Manor of Hitchin, forfeited in his father's reign through the rebellion of John de Baliol, to Robert de Kendale, with whose name this history is already familiar. For the good of his own soul the King wished to reserve a portion of the manor for religious uses, and asked for endowments for a friary to be founded on its site (263). Nor did he ask in vain. First and foremost amongst the benefactors one should name John de Blomville, a man of wealth and family and of letters, too, for it is his history of the Priory and parish the loss of which we so bitterly mourn. Next in order, and allotted equal honour by our county historians, was Adam le Rous (Adam Redhead). I suspect, however, that his grant to the King in 1317 of a house in Hitchin for the Carmelites to convert into a priory church was done less to the glory of God than for the safety of the donor's skin; for earlier in that same year he had been arrested for a crime which would make the tenure of any property precarious, to say the least. With a canon and a chantry priest of our parish church and nine other wastrels he broke by broad daylight into

a town-man's house, felled his trees, cut down his corn, comprehensively assaulted and beat his servants, and carried away six oxen and the very timbers of his house.

Meantime his brother had made off with the parson's tithe, and had found it convenient to abjure the realm. Whether the red-headed Adam won the King's pardon by his pseudo-religious donation does not appear ; but it was a happy thought, and at all events the Priory reaped an advantage. So far as real property was concerned, the third and last benefaction was made some thirty-four years later, or rather it was promised, for John de Cobham, though ready of tongue, was remarkably slow of hand. Some of the four houses and six acres of land which he obtained the King's licence (264) to assign to the Carmelites in 1351 were still in his own possession in 1375 ; and the Prior had the mortification of seeing the King's Officer seize the last portion through the licence having lapsed—a mischance that took twenty-four years of legal prolixity to mend. Meantime, in 1328, King Edward III had come to Hitchin in the course of his royal progress with Wallingford, Abbot of St. Albans, who, if Dunnage speaks the truth, seems to have kept an unofficial wife in close seclusion here (ii) (28. 52). The King confirmed his father's grant and gave the Carmelites leave to add his arms to their conventual seal. It is possible that he then endowed them with some of the seven other houses and four more acres of land which they are known later to have possessed.

III

Such was the royal and rather meagre foundation of Hitchin Priory : a small huddle of buildings in Bridge Street and Tile-house Street, which with some ingenious alterations and additions were constrained into the conventual plan and dedicated to the honour of ' Our alone Saviour and the Blessed Virgin Mary ' (279). Though only four of the northern and two of the western arches of the original cloister arcade, moulded with double ogees and chamfers, survive, and though the Chapter records seem to be irrecoverably lost, it is possible to reconstruct

ii. She died three years later and is buried in the North Chapel of our church (28. 103).

from the careful inventory of Henry VIII's Commissioners something of the general outline of the whole (270).

On the site of the house numbered 17 in Bridge Street stood the timbered and tiled gate-house, which gave sole entry to the Priory and formed the porter's lodge (iii). By the left of this were three houses occupied by the lay-brethren, who did the menial work of the community. On the right stood the guest-house, a modest dwelling where only two might sleep, and having a little garden to itself, where a guest might labour if he pleased. Passing through the gate-house, the cobbled path-way led into a formal garden out of which a visitor would turn to the right and discover a massive L-shaped building, or rather four buildings under one roof, known as the 'Owlde Halle.' This was the mansion of Adam le Rous. Facing roughly north and south, the base of the letter was fully occupied by the Chapter House, while the stem pointing due west enclosed the Prior's lodging and 'two lyttle chambers' for the friars whose duty it was to serve him day and night. From the Owlde Halle, going still westward, one came into the cloister, of which the site can be clearly distinguished to this day. On its south side it was contained by the Priory Church, built of clunch and flints, with its roof tiled no doubt from the kiln two hundred yards away in Tilehouse Street. Clear above the roof rose a spirelet or flèche encased in lead, destined one day to go into the King's armoury for use in the wars with France. Within, the church was furnished with carven seats and wainscot, some alabaster figures of the saints, brasses and table tombs of deceased priors, and windows of painted glass. On its north side the cloister was bounded by the frater or refectory, an upstairs chamber half over the north walk and half over the bursary, on the east by the dorter or dormitory, and on the west by the bursary or cellarium, the kitchen, and the great barn for storing the friars' hay (the 'hey house' as they called it) (270; 76. 119).

South-west of the church and looking down the water-meadows towards Charlton was built the scriptorium, where

iii. A secret passage is said to have led to the gate-house from the main Priory buildings for use in dangerous times. Some Puritans, seeing the direction, have scandalously assumed that the passage proceeded to the nuns' house at the Biggin, but for this there is not the least foundation. The secret passage, so called, is almost certainly a drain.

the brothers compiled 'the books of divine eloquence' and studied, though, indeed, to study there must have been immensely hard. Just think of the enticements to play truant! How pleasant to close the book and let the hours drift by dreaming over pastures as full of sunlight and sleepy kine and red sorrel as they are to-day! Through the oriel window of the great willow-tree, how charming to follow the curves of the river backwards to its source, and mark the moorhen glide into the clumps of willow-herb, that goodly gift of God from which was made a wonderful soup and a medicine against two and fifty ills! (iv) Or again, if a student were caught up in a thorny passage, how much more profitable to break away and seek inspiration up the little path left of the river, where the spring of holy water gushed from St. Winifred's well! Here in that crystal stream, what medicine for the mind, what magic for lucidity of thought! (v) Still more alluring must have been the sight of the convent garden just below; three acres of rich soil, walled about for privacy and warmth. What child of man could resist the peaches ripening on the southern walls? What friar could mark the fish-ponds at its side with the shoals of unstudious carp gliding through the shallows and return in peace of mind to the works of Thomas Aquinas?

One other sequestered spot of this peaceful community must be remembered. It stood most southerly and distant of all. Through the convent garden you passed into one larger still, which the Prior sometimes let, and from that again you followed the path on the west bank of the river till you came into what the friars called their grove—a sort of temple made with trees, pillared and girdled about with two hundred goodly elms as dark and secret as a druids' ring. Henry's Commissioners, it is true, thought but little of this grove, and valued the trees at only twopence apiece; but one may imagine how the brothers loved their woodland sanctuary. Here the Prior took his ease from the toils of discipline; here on the cool grass the sun-scorched brethren rested at noon from getting in the hay; and here at midnight, as one of our poets has feigned, one might

iv. The herb garden of the convent was in the enclosure known as Leech Croft, adjoining Charlton Lane.

v. This well is still in use. There is another holy well, oddly enough called the Bishop's Well, hidden under the grass in the centre of the lawn on the south front. Its position can be known by the hollow sound that rises as one strikes the turf.

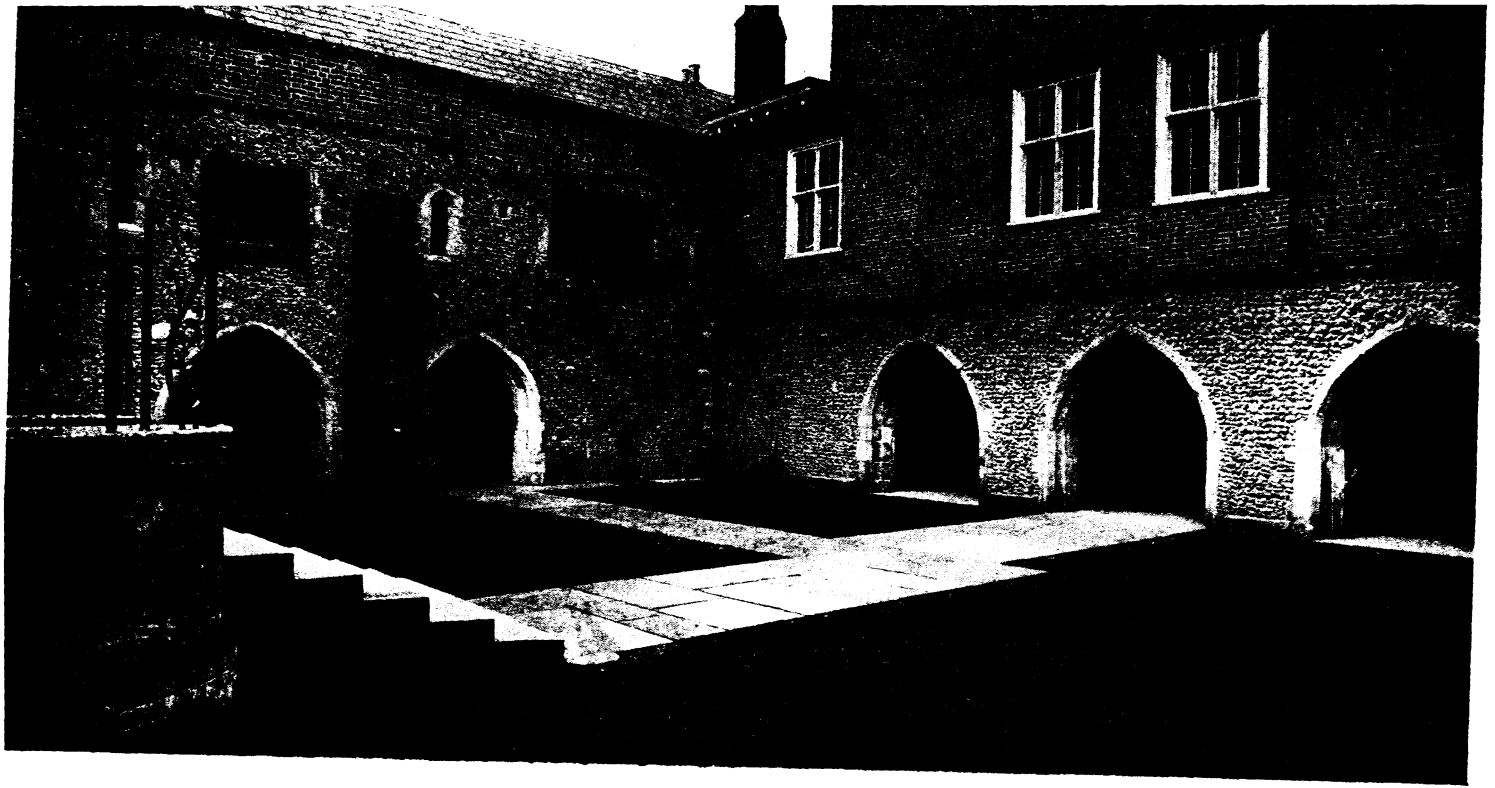
sometimes have seen a friar flee from his demon-haunted cell to wrestle with God for the possession of his soul (vi).

IV

Such, then, was the home of the White Carmelites of Hitchin, where they followed the threefold rule of religion, learning and labour. It was, as one of their own writers said, the creed of a lesser Trinity: contemplation for the soul, illumination for the mind, and some harmless amusement for Brother Ass the Body. Rising at midnight for Matins followed by Lauds, and again for Prime at five, they betook themselves to study or exercise till seven, when Low Mass was said. The Capitular or High Mass was said at the hour of ten. At eleven one of the novices rang the convent bell, and the brothers filed in to the one banquet of the day; itself another trinity of '*altum silentium*'—'perfect silence,' whilst the refectory-reading proceeded; '*clangor dentium*'—'crunching of the teeth,' till the boards were cleared; and then at last '*rumor gentium*'—the buzzing of the brethren at their gossip like a busy hive of bees. Thence through the cloisters to the cemetery to pray for the souls of those, once their beloved companions, who had 'taken their sleep in Christ' and lay there waiting a joyful resurrection; and so to the general or farm work of the convent, or recreation, or again to study. Vespers followed at five, or in the summer months at six. Then a light meal of lettuce, cheese and the famous Hitchin mead (vii); and an hour's audience later with their Prior in his lodging, or in the Chapter House. By seven Compline and all private devotions were said, and each friar was asleep in his narrow dormitory bed, till the bell, 'which rang

vi. Certain rigid archæologists, admitting no poetic licence in a domain so near their own, have pointed out that the friars slept not in separate cells but in dormitories, and that midnight was precisely the hour when the brethren went to 'mumble up their matins.'

vii. Among the Douce MSS. at the Bodleian, and elsewhere in the records of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, I have lit upon many glowing testimonies to Hitchin mead, and to the ale of Hitchin, too, which was the envy of the St. Albans monks when they paid a three days' visit in 1308. There was much complaining of the Abbey brew. It is chronicled that one particular benefactor, 'taking compassion upon the weakness of the convent's drink,' devoted the tithes of Norton, near Hitchin, to the betterment of its ale (Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, v. 669).



HITCHIN PRIORY : CLOISTER GARTH

ever at midnight,' called him again to prayer. Thus the holy chain of worship and work was brought again full circle.

I have described only the common round, but in cases of special skill or special need some of the brethren would be otherwise employed. Those, for example, whose fingers were inspired with the Holy Spirit would sit almost day long in the scriptorium, or in their carrels in the south walk of the cloister, copying some rare manuscript commentary of the fathers, or making an illuminated psalter for the church. I have lately brought two of their vellum sheets to light—one from a legal tractate of the fourteenth century and one from a missal of the fifteenth—and both hidden in the binding of a volume of plays which the first Ralph Radcliffe, 1519–59, wrote with his own hand and gave to Henry VIII (269). I traced this precious volume to the library of Lord Harlech, who allowed me to keep it for some months. The plays were performed in the refectory, which Ralph Radcliffe, then a schoolmaster, turned into a theatre, 'partly,' as Fuller says, 'to entertain his neighbours and partly to embolden his scholars in pronunciation' (27). The remaining volumes no doubt followed the accustomed fate at the time of the Dissolution. 'Those who got the religious houses at the dissolution of them,' wrote Bale, 'took the libraries as part of the bargain and booty, reserving of those books some to scour their candlesticks, and some to rub their boots. Some they sold to the grocers and soap-sellers, and some they sent over the seas to the bookbinders, not in small numbers, but at times whole shipfulls, to the wondering of foreign nations' (viii).

Those of the brethren who were scholastically inclined would instruct the novices or promising lads from the town. It was from the preparatory school here, and from that of Maldon in Essex, that most of the Carmelites in the eastern parts of England proceeded to the Carmelite College in London. In addition to this schoolmastering, there were courses of lectures arranged for the instruction of the surrounding clergy, many of whom had been unable to go to the Universities (293). Those of the brethren who possessed mere countrymen's wits would milk the cows, scour the pots and pans, and, so far as man may, would wrestle with the mysteries of the kitchen. Others again would tend the kine, scythe the lawns, and root out the weeds

viii. Quoted by Spelman, *The History and Fate of Sacrilege*, p. 218, ed. 1853.

which the Evil One sowed of nights in the convent garden. But the hand-work was not heavy. The Carmelites were a contemplative Order; and those who have seen them in their white cloaks thrown over their cumbrous woollen habits will not easily believe them capable of agricultural labour. Besides, the Hitchin Priory had only three acres of arable land, known as the 'Cummin Field.' What little corn they grew was ground at the King's mill or that of the Knights of St. John, both situate at Charlton. The malt for their liquor, the wool for their habits, the leather for their sandal-thongs and books could be got plentifully from Hitchin market, then famous for all of these. About them on every hand and blending with the sweet tones of the Priory bells was 'the noise of labour, the fulness of harvest, the creaking of loaded waggons, the bustle of farmyards, and the beating of the anvil on the forge,' pictured so well in the homely lines of our own poet, Francis Lucas :—

> 'Orchards well-planted, stacks and mows
> And tillage-gear and brindled cows,
> And sturks and colts and rude old sows,
> Whose pigs rush everywhere.'

But for good or ill *they* had chosen to dwell apart on the mountain of contemplation, to follow by austerity of discipline and solitary prayer the blessed example 'of our alone Saviour'—a life more rigorous than farmyard work. To estimate its value is no concern of mine, for the spirit can be judged only by God, who sends it. But here and there in our public records enough of their industry survives to disprove the oft-made accusation that these servants of the Most High lived here in sluggish ease.

V

On their bede-roll are some shining names, not only famous in their day and generation but still remembered, though but faintly, in our own. To mention only a few, there was Brother Hugh (272), a very learned and prolific writer, whose mental activities remind one of Lydgate, his contemporary; it was said that his collected works heaped up a wagon that hardly two oxen could draw. Born at St. Neots, he was, says Fuller, 'bred a Carmelite in Hitching.' In due time he proceeded to Cam-

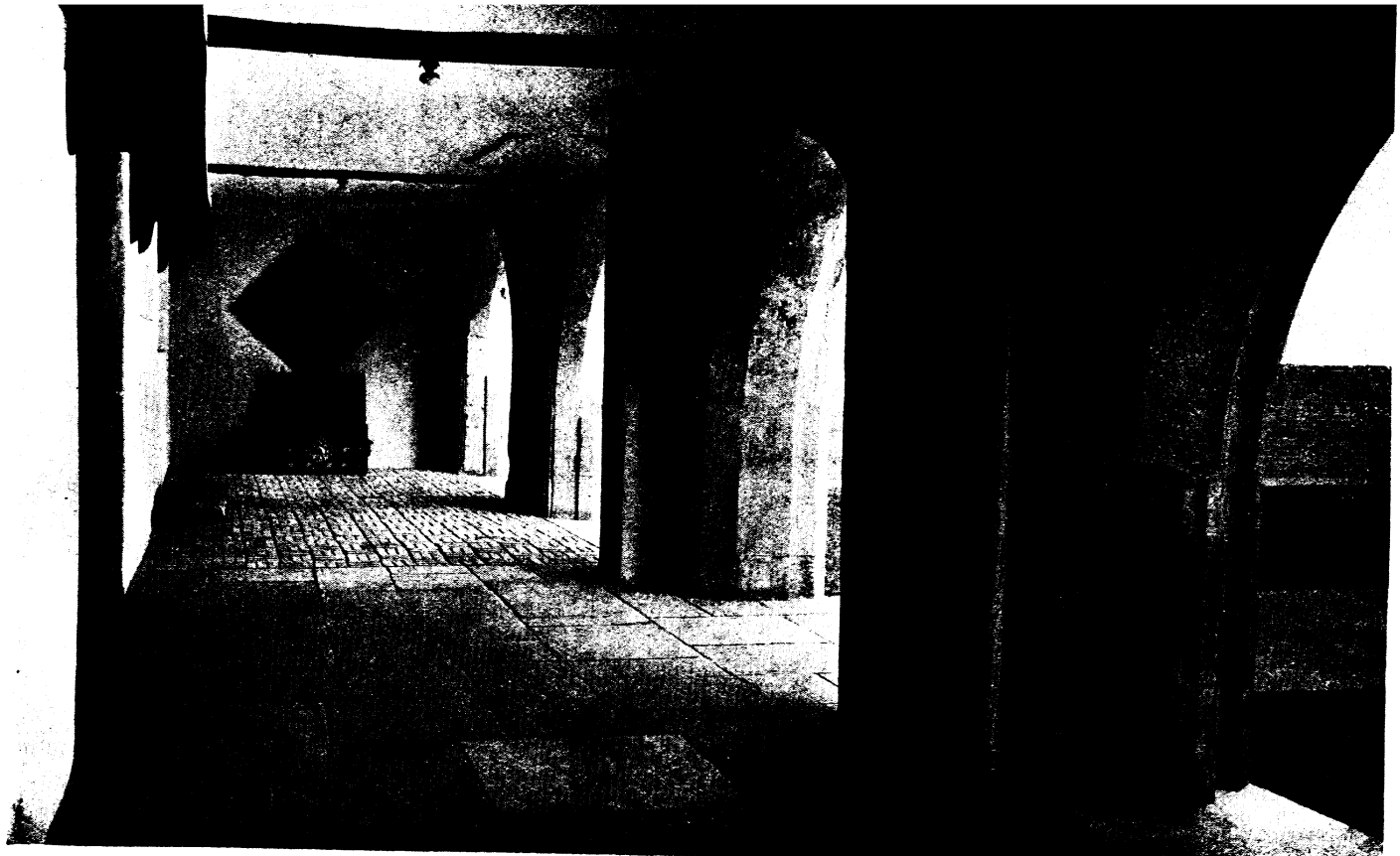
bridge (ix), where, by reason of the amazing erudition he showed in his sermons and public disputations, the degree of a Doctor was conferred *honoris causa* upon him. After quitting the University, he retired into the convent at Hitchin. His works include a *Commentary on St. Luke*, a book on *The Conception of the Virgin Mary*, *Sermons for the Year*, a volume of *Questions at Issue*, 'and some others,' adds Bale, 'which he had not allowed to go out into the world, and which perished afterwards in the untimely conflagration of the library of his friary.' This fire at Hitchin Priory seems to have occurred towards the end of the fifteenth century, and is known to have consumed a treatise on Canon Law of Brother Walter Canon. It is not unlikely that the Chapter records met with a similar fate (268. *d.* 68. *b*). But to return to Brother Hugh. 'He led an honest life,' says Bale, 'devoted to the arts, and sought the life of truth in the midst of Egyptian darkness. He slept little at any time (he may never sleep who keeps watch over Israel), and never ceased to arouse the sleeping multitude of men by the power of his orations and night thoughts. Even as a fish in a muddy stream so he lived, yet preserved always the sweet flavour of piety.' He 'departed this life for eternal light' on the day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, 1341, and lies buried in the cloister garth at Hitchin (272).

Again, there was Thomas Netter de Walden (1367–1430), who, though not formally canonized, has always been reckoned amongst the saints of the Carmelite Order (283. 2). Born at Saffron Walden, he spent part of his youth at Hitchin before proceeding to London, and laid here the foundation of that learning (*Doctor Authenticus* they styled him) which was to

ix. According to Bale, Hugh was a student and graduate at Oxford, not at Cambridge. It may be well to warn the student in passing of the many conflicting details which are to be discovered in Bale and Leland and Fuller. The difficulty is to know which of them to trust. With respect to Bale, it is necessary to remember certain facts. Whilst he was still a friar, he collected an immense number of notes of the utmost value in the various libraries he examined. These notes are to be found in Harleian MSS. 1819, Bodleian MSS. 73, Selden MSS. 41 *supra*. From these rough notes he compiled his list of writers in Harleian MSS. 3838. This list he gave to Leland, who incorporated the whole of it, with sarcastic comments and many mistakes, in his own collection. When finally Bale prepared his *Scriptores* for the press 1548, he had none of his note-books at hand, as these were still in Leland's keeping, but he did have Leland's work before him. Accordingly he adopts Leland's errors and disparaging comments, and, being himself no longer in the Order, adds thereto a number of his own. To be quite fair to the Carmelites, it is therefore necessary to go back to Bale's MS. notes, or take his printed pages with frequent pinches of salt.

make him famous throughout Europe. 'He might,' says Fuller, 'have changed his cowl into what English mitre he pleased, but refused it' (27). Such was his power of persuasion and controversy (*Princeps Controversistarum*—another of his titles) before the Councils of Pisa and Constance in 1409 and 1415 that, when the Provincial of the Carmelites died, they appointed him to the office, though only forty-two years of age. And such his knowledge and relentless activity where heresy was in question that he was made Inquisitor for England. His admirers, mindful of the 'retiarii' in the gladiatorial combats, loved to play with his name, 'for never was there such a netter of heretics.' He tells in his chronicle how, being at the trial of one Taylor for heresy, the latter outrageously declared that 'a spider is more worthy of reverence than the Mass; and straightway (says Walden) a great spider of horrid aspect came down from the roof by its very thread and sought to enter the mouth of the blasphemer. There was present Thomas, Duke of Exeter, then Chancellor of the Kingdom, who saw the prodigy.' He tells again of his disputation with another Lollard, Peter Clerke, who finally 'choked himself with silliness' and abandoned the debate. 'Yet,' Walden observes, 'almost daily, Catholic men of the true Israel hear the sermons of such a Philistine, and are stupefied with their grandiloquent display.' After a famous sermon at Paul's Cross, Walden was chosen by Henry V to be his confessor, and afterwards entrusted with many matters of State. It was at his master's wish that he went in 1419 to make peace between the King of Poland and Michael, the Grand-Master of the Teutonic Knights; and it was in his arms in 1422 that Henry breathed his last. He preached the funeral sermon at Westminster on November 6th that year. For the last eight years of his life, Walden served the young King, Henry VI, as tutor and father-confessor, and died upon a journey with him at Rouen in 1430; leaving, in spite of a stirring life, no less than fifty-one works, some of ten or twelve books each, to serve for a lasting monument (272. 287. 288. 290. 291). His *Doctrinale* (x) and his collection of documents relating to the

x. *Doctrinale antiquum fidei ecclesiæ Catholicæ*. This came to be printed at Paris, 1521–23, in 3 vols. folio. Archdeacon Churton, in his *Lives of the Founders of Brasenose College*, informs us that Russel, Bishop of Lincoln, being harassed and fatigued, as he feelingly complains, with the multitude of heretics at Oxford in 1491, met with this manuscript of Walden, and made extracts from it for the more speedy and effectual



HITCHIN PRIORY : NORTH WALK OF CLOISTER

early Lollards, *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, are read as classics to this day (280).

With the name of Walden should be associated that of his friend, Thomas Ashwell. After years of preparation in the Hitchin cloister, he also had gone out into the world and made a name for himself. In 1407 he was elected Prior of the convent at Cambridge (268. *b*. 79). In 1419 he was promoted to be Vicar-Provincial, either during the temporary absence of the Provincial or as president of one of the four 'distinctions' into which the English province was divided. In 1421, when the Provincial of the Friars Minor offered 'reciprocity of prayers' to the Carmelites assembled in Chapter at Northampton, it was he who selected the names of those deceased brethren of his Order for whom prayer was to be made (268. *b*. 100. *b*). The full measure of his attainment, however, came a little later, when he was chosen by Henry Beaufort, Cardinal Bishop of Winchester, to be his secretary, almoner and confessor (268. *b*. 97. *b*). From that time onward his life was the life of that restless, intriguing prelate. But he finished, as he began, amongst the brethren at Hitchin. There he died on December 15, 1438 (287. 1. 442). His writings have been scattered to the winds. His fame has slipped long since out of the short memory of men. All that survives is his name, very faintly cut in the clunch of one of the cloister arcades. It seems to cry rather plaintively out of the stone to an age no longer concerned with reciprocity of prayers. But those pious few who light upon it may well incline to breathe a prayer for the repose of his soul.

Finally, there was Peter Stokes, whose Carmelite contemplations led on to worldly disputations, and almost won him a martyr's crown (283. 5). The story of his life is told rather prettily by John Bale (272. 496), himself a Carmelite, though he renounced his vows 'for love of his sweet Dorothy,' and afterwards wrote rather bitterly against the Order. 'One Peter Stokes,' he begins, 'a Carmelite, a kind of people prone and ready to all kinds of mischief, uproars, debate and dissen-

refutation of the 'insane dogmas' with which so many of his countrymen were infected. Having framed his compendium with great care, he ordered it to be preserved in the registry of the See for the benefit of his successors in their examinations of 'heretical depravity,' pronouncing an anathema at the same time against anyone who should obliterate the title or the name of the compiler. The original copy of this 'touchstone of error' is still preserved in the library of University College, Oxford.

sion, as though they were born and provided only for that purpose.' Again he likens them to spiders 'who suck out whatever pleasant juice there is in herbs and convert it into poison.' It seems that after years of study in Hitchin Priory Brother Peter packed up his best theses and rode away to Oxford in 1382, 'aspiring to the degree of Doctor of Divinity.' Incidentally he wanted to have a fling at the 'evil men of Lollardy,' whose intellectual home was there. Already he was well known to them, for he had preached fifty sermons against them, and Wiclif himself had nicknamed him 'the little white dog,' because he barked and worried them incessantly in his books (xi). He evidently deserved the rhyme doggerel made in his dishonour (281) :—

> 'In temper he was red, though in raiment he was white ;
> Everybody else was wrong, and only he was right' (xii).

So when Peter stood up in Convocation at Oxford and claimed his degree there was a most disorderly scene. The Lollards, led by Nicholas of Hereford and backed by Rigge, the Chancellor of the University, shouted him down and tried to stir up an insurrection. In an interval of comparative quiet, Peter produced a complete list of their heresies, which he had got a scrivener beforehand to write out, and declaimed it at full voice. Then one Crumpe continued the battle on his side : a cantankerous Irishman and something of a Cistercian, though not much. Bale calls him 'a master of fallacies, a false priest, a weeping fox, a wine-bibbing enemy of the Lord,' and so on (272. 246). Between them they created such a tumult that Crumpe was suspended and Peter's doctorate was disallowed. Nothing daunted, however, they set out for London, showed their grievances to Archbishop Courtenay and the King's Council, and returned 'like Saul, the fierce, armed with royal authority,' to wit a sentence of condemnation on Wiclif's heresies passed at the Synod of Blackfriars, and general warrants against all the Lollards. That very day Nicholas of Hereford, the arch-Lollard, was preaching the University sermon, but Peter 'dust not for

xi. Fuller must have been thinking of this when he came to write of Wiclif and of his marvellous escape from martyrdom. 'Admirable it was,' he says, 'that a hare so often hunted, with so many packs of dogs, should die at last quietly sitting in his form.'

xii. '*Rufus naturaliter et veste dealbatus*
Omnibus impatiens et nimiis elatus.'

his life' stop his mouth with the Archbishop's edict, because the Chancellor had packed the church with two hundred of his soldiers. He 'kept himself within the sanctuary of the church, not daring as then to put out his head,' though it galled him excessively to see the Chancellor on leaving the church smiling at the success of his plan. Next day, however, he had a public debate with Repyngdon, another 'great champion and assertor of the doctrine of John Wiclif,' and was putting him to confusion when twelve students came in, displaying armour and weapons beneath their gowns. Then for the second time the little white dog turned tail and fled ('otherwise,' he says to the Archbishop, 'I should have been murdered in my chair'); this time back to his kennel at Hitchin, leaving the Archbishop and twenty divines to stamp out the conflagration he had caused. The rest of his life he passed peacefully at Hitchin, completing a treatise on the superior clergy, some translations of Holy Writ into the vulgar tongue, and some lively pamphlets against those who had deprived him of his degree. On July 28, 1399, he 'closed his last day,' and was buried in his robe and scapulary, a garment so sacred that the Virgin Mary, it was said, had promised to visit purgatory for the relief of those who had worn it (280. 281. 287. 288. 290. 291).

These are names that still stand out in the bede-rolls of cloistered chroniclers. The rest have gone down into silence. They lived too quietly to leave a trace, on earth at any rate. Ruled like the pages of an antiphonary, their weeks and days and hours passed smoothly away with the peaceful monotony of plain-song. To be sure, there never yet was a house where the brethren dwelt together in perfect unity. Needs be that offences come. The 'pest of murmuring' crept now and again even into the Hitchin cloister.

There is surviving a letter of condolence written by Thomas Netter de Walden to his good friend Master Ashwell, who 'has suffered defamation by the mouth of brother William' (268. *b*. 102. *a*). There is a further letter by Netter to the Prior of Charterhouse at Sheen, dated March 25, 1415, in which he has to complain bitterly of John Buxhale, who, in applying to be received into the Charterhouse, had the audacity to say he was unable to lead a good life amongst the Carmelites at Hitchin: 'If he had *wished* to be good,' observes Netter, 'he could most assuredly have been so. Let him speak the truth. Is it not

amongst us that he has learned to subdue the passions and overcome the appetites of youth? Where did he begin to see the beauty of holiness and hold the world in contempt if it was not with us? Where, I demand to know, where if not here, was he taught to practise chastity and the golden rule? From his youth up, has he not lived with us? I need bring no other witness but myself to recall to brother John how much of the world's contumely we have together endured, how many tears we have shed side by side in daily confession, how many a time and oft he and I have spent half the night in prayer and, worn out with watching, have stretched our frozen limbs along the cold stone floor. Brought up as he certainly was in this austere school, is he not ashamed to pretend that he cannot be good amongst us? But let me ask your forgiveness that I should thus allow myself to be offended. The good brother John need not be alarmed. I, for my part, shall be very beholden to you, most venerable father and beloved brother in the faith, if *you* succeed in making him good, since with us he can be nothing of the kind. Nay more, in order to disburthen myself of all my responsibilities, I propose to send you for their betterment forty more of our brethren, of whom not one shall be any worse or any better than brother John. Tell me, if you will, what you think of my plan' (287. 1. 442).

In the ascetic community which Netter here describes there were some, nevertheless, whose murmuring had vent in acts of indiscipline. Walter Canon, for example, that learned professor of the Canon Law already named, was for some time under sentence of excommunication for 'irregularities and insubordination' (xiii). Other Hitchin friars there were who turned apostate and 'strutted about in the common paths of the world.' Only twenty-two years after the priory was founded writs had to be issued for the arrest of 'certain Carmelites who have spurned their profession and become vagabond' (C.P.R. 1338–40. *m.* 34. *d*). And some had better have gone who stayed to be a canker in the bosom of the community, 'lorels, lollers and spille-tymes,' as the Lollards spitefully called them. In the main, however, 'the path of God's commandments was run with unspeakable

xiii. He was rehabilitated at a Provincial Chapter held at Hitchin on November 1, 1504, on which occasion the Convent was honoured by the presence of Peter Terasse, the General of the Order, then on a visitation to England. Other Provincial Chapters were held at Hitchin Priory in the years 1374, 1394, 1430, 1475, 1526 (268. *b.* 80).

A CARMELITE FRIAR

From *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques, Religieux et Militaires*, 1714, vol. i, p. 333

loving-sweetness,' as the rule prescribed. Their certainty of possessing the eternal truth saved them from much disquietude of soul; their contemplations were calm; and there was still love and pity left over for the needs of the fatherless and the afflicted. As a fraternity of mercy (so an old chronicler declares) 'they served the Lord Christ like exemplary bees and used every means of dispensing charity to the poor.'

What a long way from the traditional misconception of the Religious Orders, in which, according to Croce, 'we seem to see the lean-faced friar thrusting his trembling head out of the narrow window of his cell every five or eleven years, just to make sure that menkind were not all dead; and then immuring himself once more within his self-appointed prison.'

VI

As with most of the Religious Orders in England, the decline set in about the close of the fifteenth century. It was then there began to be a danger 'lest one good custom should corrupt the world.' By that time the Wars of the Roses had set men murmuring at the futility of the Faith. The hold it once had over kings and notables and knaves was lost. First John Ball and then the Lollards had preached against the pride and privilege of the clergy. In this county especially the Lollards had been strong. Moreover, the immorality of the mendicants had made the name of 'friar' stink in the nostrils of the nation. The common people—already aware of their coming independence—preferred to give their money to the gilds which they managed for themselves, or to found chantries where their names might be more exalted. For a time the brethren were saved the pinch of poverty, though that should not have troubled their ascetic Order. There were yet in Hitchin a number of people—chiefly widows and old men of the devouter sort—to befriend them in their need. No more lands and tenements came their way, but the bequests of money were still frequent. In 1491 John Thurgar gave them half a quarter of wheat for their maintenance and 4d. in money to maintain the light before the crucifix in the Priory Church. In 1509 John Middleton gave them £6 13s. 4d. (worth £100 of our money) 'to keep an yerely obit or anniversary solempenely by note for my soule,' and 40s. more 'to the reparacion of the church of the said Freres and

of the housyng thereto belonging.' Seventeen years before Sir John Sturgeon (xiv) bribed them with 13s. 4d. ' to pray for my soul and for that of Edward IV ' ; rather poor payment for two such inveterate sinners. From Edward Moody, 1504, whose son twenty years after saved the great despoiler's life when he fell head first into the Hiz, they received two quarters of malt ; and from another cheery soul they had a butt of red Gascony wine. From James Chetham, 1523, they had not only money and malt, but 2,000 tiles to repair the roof of their church. Sometimes the gifts were personal, as in 1501, when the widow Drake not only gave £6 13s. 4d. ' of good money to the House of Friars,' but 20s. to Sir John Durrant, the then Prior, and 40s. to ' Frier Plummer,' her confessor. And once, after their own library had been destroyed by fire, a friendly vicar of St. Mary took pity on them and bequeathed them his own books. The most interesting will, however, is that of Thomas Wynch, 1530, who in return for the privilege of being buried ' in the church of our Ladye Fryers in Hychyn otherwise called White Friars Carmelittes,' made them his residuary legatees. In addition he made them these following bequests : ' To the high altar of said Friars 6s. 8d. to make a tabernacle of our Lady at the right seide of the queyre ; I will that Frier John Butler do sing for my soull and all my good friends' soulls for the space of one yeare, and to have for his laboure £3 6s. 8d. ; I will to our Ladye Friars £8 for a coope [cope] of redde velvette ; I will unto the mending of the organs of said Friers, £4 ; I will unto the giltinge of the aultere on the right side in the foresaid Friers churche 4 marcs ; to the giltinge of the tabernacle of our Lady of Comforte, 40s. ; also unto said Friers £3 6s. 8d. to the repair of the church in tyle and lathe and nayle ' (265).

Even with these benefactions, which could be multiplied by ten (xv), the Prior could not make ends meet. On October 17, 1508, the nine brethren who were left signed away the convent garden for the space of ninety-nine years ; and, little dreaming

xiv. A royal sturgeon he ; for he held the lucrative post of munitioner to His Majesty King Edward IV. If the State Papers speak true, he was a shameful profiteer and was thrice convicted of misappropriating public money. His carven tomb lies in fragments behind the altar of our Trinity Chapel, and really ought to be pieced together and set up in the church.

xv. See more particularly the wills of John Scott, 1491, Thomas Love, 1509, James Tydye, 1517, William Papworth, 1520, John Smyth, 1521, John Wyytt, 1527, Agnes Hemynge, 1533, Richard Handleye, 1534. The references to these are given in the Bibliography, No. 170.

of their fate, gave the usual covenant for quiet enjoyment (2. 16). The grant is countersigned by Robert Love, the Provincial of the English Carmelites, who also sprang from Hitchin. Two other benefactors should be named. On September 3, 1530, King Henry was staying near by at his manor of Moormead; being told of their distress, he sent 40s. to the friars whom so soon he was going to dissolve (267. 5. 751). Of the last benefaction of all, that of John and Ann Rugmer in 1531, the original acknowledgment survives—a precious document, reflecting a beauty of holiness which shone not seldom in the hearts of these Carmelite friars. I make no apology for transcribing it in full. 'Friar John Butler, local Prior and servant of the Brethren of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, of Mount Carmel in the Convent of Hitchin, to our well-beloved in Christ John Rugmer and Anne his Wife, Greeting, and wishing them to merit heavenly kingdoms by the assistance of prayers. We most diligently observing and commending in the Lord the sincere devotion which you have to our Order for the reverence of Christ and the blessed glorious Virgin Mary, by whose title our said Order is more particularly distinguished, and with respect to those things especially which regard the health of souls, so far as we can with God, we desire to repay you a good office. Therefore by these presents we grant you perpetual participation (as well during life as after death) in all the Masses, Fasts, Vigils, Prayers, Preachings, Abstinences and all other good works which the clemency of our Saviour shall mercifully vouchsafe to be performed by our brethren in the said Convent. Adding moreover and granting of our special grace that, when the memory of our obits shall be recited in our Conventual Chapter, the same shall be done for you in every respect which is commonly accustomed to be done for the deceased brethren of our Order. In witness whereof the seal of my Office of Prior is annexed to these presents. Given in our Council aforesaid Anno Domini 1531' (2. 17).

VII

It was just three years later that the first blow fell; and to the friars it was by no means unexpected. They had foreseen that the King's blind lust would overturn the world. They were soon to watch with envy the magnificent courage and

martyrdom of the Blessed More and the Carthusians of London. With envy, I say, for they had received secret orders from their own Provincial to seek no crown of martyrdom, but to be obedient to the King (xvi). On May 5, 1534, the King's Messenger, 'a vehement swift-riding man,' rode through the gate-house and summoned the brothers to take the Oath of Supremacy. It was a lengthy document to which he had that same morning obtained the signatures of the Priors of King's Langley, Aylesbury, Dunstable and Bedford, and which he was still to carry to the Franciscans of More—no mean feat of horsemanship and persuasion for one day. 'The document,' as the historian Burnet noted, 'is a priceless relic, because in Mary's reign, 1557, Bishop Bonner had a commission to collect and destroy all writings in contempt of the Holy See, and did his work so thoroughly that this sex-partite oath is the last but one that survives' (xvii). In brief, John Butler, on behalf of the Hitchin Priory, 'professed, testified and vowed to perform entire, inviolate and constant faith, respect and obedience towards his Lord, King Henry VIII, and towards his most serene consort, Queen Anne, and towards the holy and pure matrimony lately contracted, done and consummated between them. Also to account the Bishop of Rome, who in his bulls usurps the name of Pope and arrogates to himself the dignity of High Priest, of no greater authority than any other bishop in England.' With a touch of irony the form concludes by stating that the Prior 'subscribed not of compulsion but by choice' (2. 19).

Another five years of prayer and intercession, five anxious, interminable years, each day portending what the next might bring, each day's sky more ominous than the last with clouds mustering for the final storm. Then, as if by a flash of lightning, they found that all the time they had been harbouring an Iscariot

xvi. John Bird, the last Provincial, played a sorry, if not a craven, part; and so pleased the King with his course of sermons against the Pope's Supremacy that he was appointed the first bishop of the new diocese of Chester, 1541. On Mary's accession he was deprived for having married, whereupon he repudiated his wife and showed such abject signs of repentance that Bonner, Bishop of London, made him his own Suffragan. In 1558, just as he was preparing to change his opinions once again in conformity with those of the new Protestant Queen, he was called upon to change this life for another, and appear before Him whose supremacy over King and Pope alike not even this sycophant could question (283. 6).

xvii. In this Burnet was mistaken. At least 105 acknowledgments of Royal supremacy are now known to be extant.

in their midst. Their own tenant, Thomas Parys, was in the pay of Cromwell, singled out in the secret service to inform against the friars and to invent immoralities where otherwise no information could be laid. Through the State Papers one can follow him almost daily, spying treacherously into the convents of every county, signing his reports ' your assuryd beydesman and servant,' and closing each with a petition for the spoil, like a hungry jackal picking the friars' bones (267. xiii). It was he who, finding nothing else to lay against his landlords, suggested to Secretary Wriothesley that he should examine Prior Dove of the Calais Carmelites, who had as a young man served some years in the Priory at Hitchin. Accordingly some twenty-three searching questions were sent over the water, and evidence taken on commission ; the main point being to prove that Dove had attended the sermons of one Damplip (a rather appropriate name for a frothy, rhetorical preacher), ' who came lately out of Germany.' Amongst other wild things, this preacher had said of the sacrament of the altar : ' It is not in a knave priest to make God,' and of the miracle of the mass, ' A mouse would as soon eat the body of God as any other cake.' For such sayings he was put to death, but not before he had set Cranmer against Cromwell, and almost lost Calais by constant insurrection (267. xiii. 1. 451. 513. 530 & xv. 215). This evidence being insufficient, Parys, who badly wanted some of the Priory property, dropped his wiliness and tried a bolder stroke. He told Cromwell that though Hitchin was not amongst those few houses of friars ' which have any substance of lead,' yet it had in its gutters enough to be well worth seizing (267. 13. 1. 191). That ponderous and metallic argument was far more likely to move Cromwell (the *Malleus Monachorum*, or, as old Fuller renders it Mauler of Monasteries) ; for, as one of our Priory papers bitterly remarks, he was merely a blacksmith's son.

Whatever penance and humility could do, that they tried to ward off the impending ruin. Their petition went to swell the thousands from their sister convents which Cromwell filed and forgot, though some are piteous enough to have made even a heart of lead relent : ' beseeching your good mastership for the love of Christ's passion to help to the preservation of this poor house, that we your bedesmen may remain in the service of God with the meanest living that any poor men may live with in this world.' It was not God's will, however, nor the

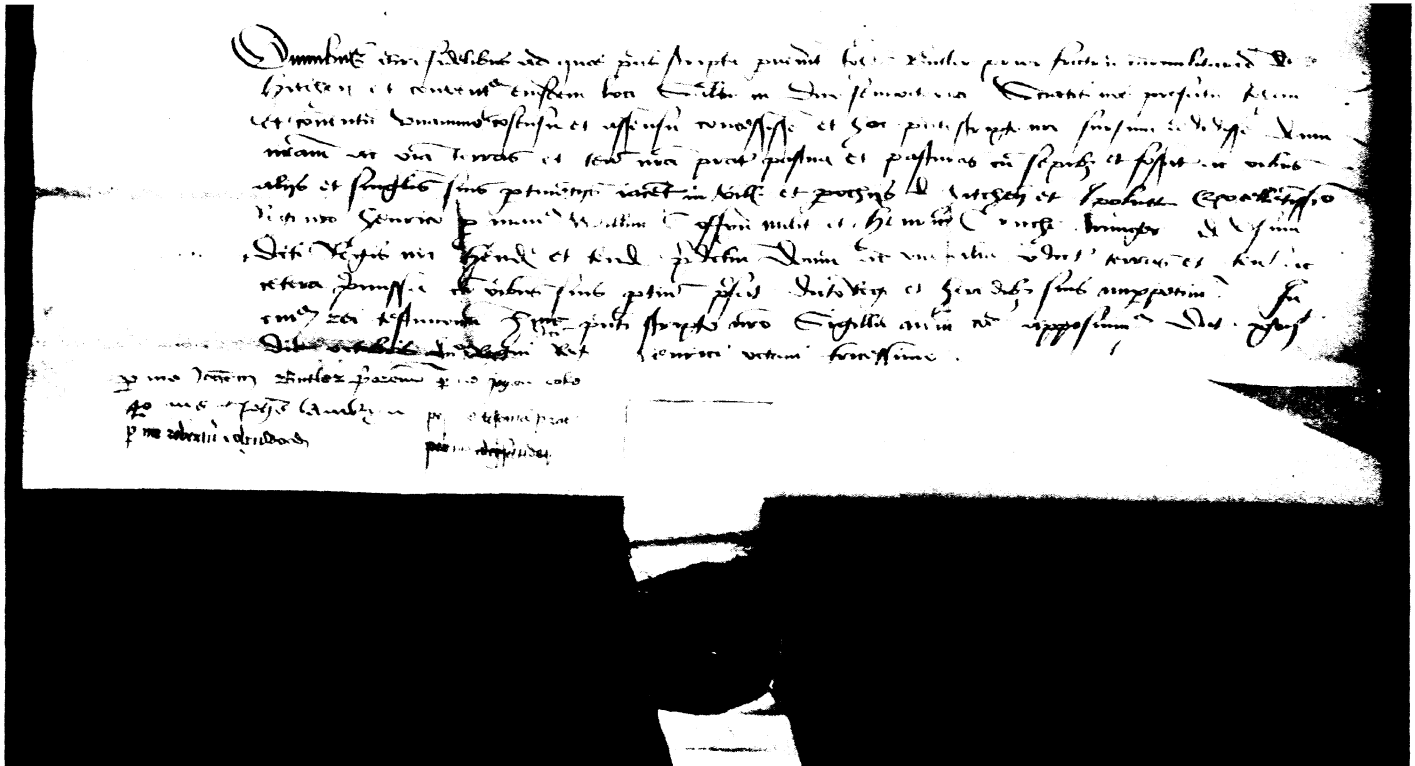
King's pleasure that they should be delivered from the hands of the spoiler.

VIII

On October 16, 1539, Sir William Coffyn (xviii) and Henry Crouch, two more of Cromwell's minions, entered the Priory, summoned a chapter of the brothers, now reduced to five, and showed them the commission of their master. There it was, fresh from the Palace of Westminster the day before, signed by Thomas Crumbwell [*sic*], and sealed with the Privy Seal. After reciting that 'the house of the White Friars within our town of Hytching remayneth at this present in such state that it is neyther used to the honour of God or the benefite of our common wealth,' the document naïvely announced that the King 'mynded for the conversion of it to another purpose, to take it into our hands,' and then gave the usual directions as to the form of the surrender (2. 20). At the request of the Prior, a day's grace was allowed; and that evening the last Chapter was held, the Prior's last blessing given, and the last prayers said in the cemetery for the souls of the departed. It would need a reverent and tender pen to tell the hours of that night. By the morning the Prior had with his own hands written out the deed of surrender as we see it to this day, in sentences very different from Cromwell's brutal style, and even wishing 'to the most excellent King Henry and to all the faithful in Christ salvation in the Everlasting Lord.' At the foot and beneath their prior's hand, four of the brethren signed; but the fifth, Alexander, after writing his name, repented of the deed and struck the pen firmly through—the act of a brave man, for it must have lost him his livelihood at least (2. 22). Then the Priory seal was affixed for the last time (xix), and the

xviii. In the State Papers he is called 'a very gentleman'; but the same volumes charge him with 'withholding a lady's hawk, a poor man's riding saddle,' and a large landed estate, which he retained by bribing the judges with two casks of wine. Also he 'made privy labour to be of the Order of the Garter, and would give much money to have it.' A fair representative of the new order of profiteers whom Sir Thomas More alluded to as 'covetous and insatiable cormorants' (123. *a*).

xix. See illustration at the end of this chapter. Two kneeling friars beneath the figure of the Blessed Virgin and the Child. In the field on either side of her a flowering branch. Right and left the shields of Edward II and Edward III. Legend: *S' Cōitatis FRA' Carmelitar' de Huche.* The matrix of the seal is still at the Priory in the keeping of the Radcliffe family (278).



THE SURRENDER OF THE WHITE CARMELITES OF HITCHIN, 1539

Note the erasure of Brother Alexander's Christian name. It looks as though he altered his mind in the very act of signing, and before his surname had been penned. The erasure is believed by experts to be contemporary with the document

piety and humble endeavour of two hundred and twenty-two years brought utterly to an end. To the friars, in spite of their outward submission, it must have seemed as though Antichrist had come; as it did to their brothers in distress at Royston Priory, who gathered in one of the inns there and signed the weird prophecy 'that the kynge shall not lyve a month after the feast of the nativitie of Saynt John Baptiste except he do amende his condicions; and further that after the said tyme an horse of Xs price shall be able to bear all the noble bloode of England.' Here there was no such idle beating of the air; for the life of contemplation makes the buffets of this world a very little matter. They are lost in the sense of the immanence of God. At the same time a curious retribution does seem to have fallen upon the three main agents concerned in the ruin of our Priory. In less than two months Sir William Coffyn paid the penalty of a mortal and sinful man. His widow begged Cromwell to tell the King that 'he died of the great sickness, full of God's marks all over his body' (267. xiv. 2. 239). The following year Parys was deserted by his rich wife, though he arraigned her before two bishops and four doctors of law for 'separating herself from him and depriving him of conjugal rights' (xx). By her felony in 1542 he lost what he valued more, namely her fortune of lands, chattels and 1,500 sheep (267. xv, p. 510; xvii, p. 563). He died, so it was said, 'of mere ill-humour,' in 1560. As for Crouch, he made a miserable muddle of his after-life, fell into hopeless arrears with the King's money, and was finally dispatched by the Privy Council (267. xxi, pt. 1, p. 698).

The next day, so instant was the King's command, the brothers went out into the inhospitable world; I had almost said 'into the everlasting night,' for not a vestige of their fate remains. A kindlier fortune fell to Prior Butler, for a Chantry priest of the parish church had lately died, and the gild or brotherhood of St. Mary, in whose gift the appointment lay, graciously offered the vacancy to him. Another piece of fortune befell Butler that same year, for his friend, Edward Trycotte, died and left him a black gown and £6 6s. 8d. 'to seye masse for my soulle

xx. It is satisfying to know that this, her third marriage, proved so disastrous. It deserved to be. It was Parys's master, Cromwell, who more than anyone had brought about the death of that rare spirit Sir Adrian Fortescue, her second husband, executed for reasons of State in July 1539. Yet almost the first act of her widowhood was to rush into this creature's arms.

and all Christian soulls and to do divine service in the parish church of Hichyn by the space of a yeare ' (265). In the Chantry Certificate of 1551 we catch the last glimpse of him: ' an old man of sixty years with no other living but the service of the Fraternity, namely, vi^{l}. xiii^{s}. iiij^{d}.' (178). I have seen one petition of his to Thomas Cromwell a year or two before, ' begging your Lordship's goodness to consider my grievous sorrows,' but nothing came of it, nor any pension till 1553, when for a season the old faith was restored.

The moment the friars were gone, Coffyn and Crouche (what appropriate names for these human vultures) stripped the lead, bells and glass from the Priory Church, so that the spirelet crashed through the timbered roof and, amongst other damage, ' foure lyttle graven-stones were brused and broken.' To the informer Parys were given the Friars' Grove, some ruinous buildings for the enlargement of his house, and all the ' plate, jewelles, ornaments, copes and other implements.' These last, however, were in trust for the King, to be sold by auction and the proceeds entered in a Book of Remembrance and paid to the Court of Augmentation. But though I have made diligent search I cannot trace the ' accomplysshement of his Accomptes ' which Parys promised for the ' iiiith day of next terme.' It is a pity, for it still further darkens his character, and deprives us of much detail of the goods and chattels of the friars and the interior of their church (270).

IX

For seven years the Priory lay desolate, and its buildings fell into decay. Most pathetic reading is the inventory of its condition by ' xii honeste, dyscrete and most substancyall menne of the parisshe of Hychen ' in 1546, when two land-jobbers, Herdson and Watson, purchased it of the King. ' The twelve good men and true ' found the Priory to be worth only £5 18s. by the year, whereas Dugdale gives the value at suppression at £13 14s. Nothing seems to be known of Watson, but Herdson was a skinner by trade and reputation. He was the same year appointed Comptroller of the King's Customs and Subsidies in the Port of London. He and Watson gave the King £1,541 for the Priory and other lands, and made huge profits by selling in small lots. ' All the Buyldinges,' so runs the Inventory, ' are

verrye Ruynowce both in tymber and tyle for lack of Reparacions, insomuch that sutch as hath any estate of them hath forfeted their leases, openly affyrmyng that they had rather forgowe their interest thereof than occupy according to their covenants to repayre. As for the gardens they are but as yardes and voyde places of grounde; nevertheless foreasmuche as thei have in ayncyent tyme-past born the name of garden plottes we have charged and entered them as sutche' (271). They report the mansion house in good repair for the reason that Ralph Radcliffe, a poor schoolmaster, playwright and scholar of Jesus College, Cambridge, had for some years lived there and started a private school. Though he was of noble family and acquainted with the King, it is due solely to his own brains and hard work that he was able two years later, 1548, to buy the estate and afterwards add acre to acre as his pupils increased. I am often informed that the original grant was to the Radcliffes, and that, being in possession of 'Priory' lands, they suffered the usual punishment in failure of male issue. Neither statement is true. They bought for good money of the original grantees, and enjoyed the normal run of straight successions. It was not till late in the eighteenth century that the male line became extinct (73. *a*).

If I were asked by a stranger where the old Priory was, I should wave my arms wide over all the town. In the present mansion, built by John Radcliffe, a merchant-adventurer of Aleppo, Smyrna and Baghdad, about the year 1775, there is little old work to show (xxi). But between 1539 and 1546 the old Priory was used as a quarry for the town. Anyone then building a new house took his carts that way. So in the Cock Hotel, in the old Red Lion, in the gabled house by the Exchange Yard destroyed in 1899, and in the timbered shop at the south entry to the church, there is or was whole tons of carved or moulded stone. So, too, if we did but know it, in a hundred houses more; their faces may be Georgian, but their hearts are Tudor to the core. It is scarcely too fanciful to say that, though the friars and their faith may be forgotten, their 'works' still uphold our town!

* * * * * *

Be it tempting as it may, it is not for the historian to moralize

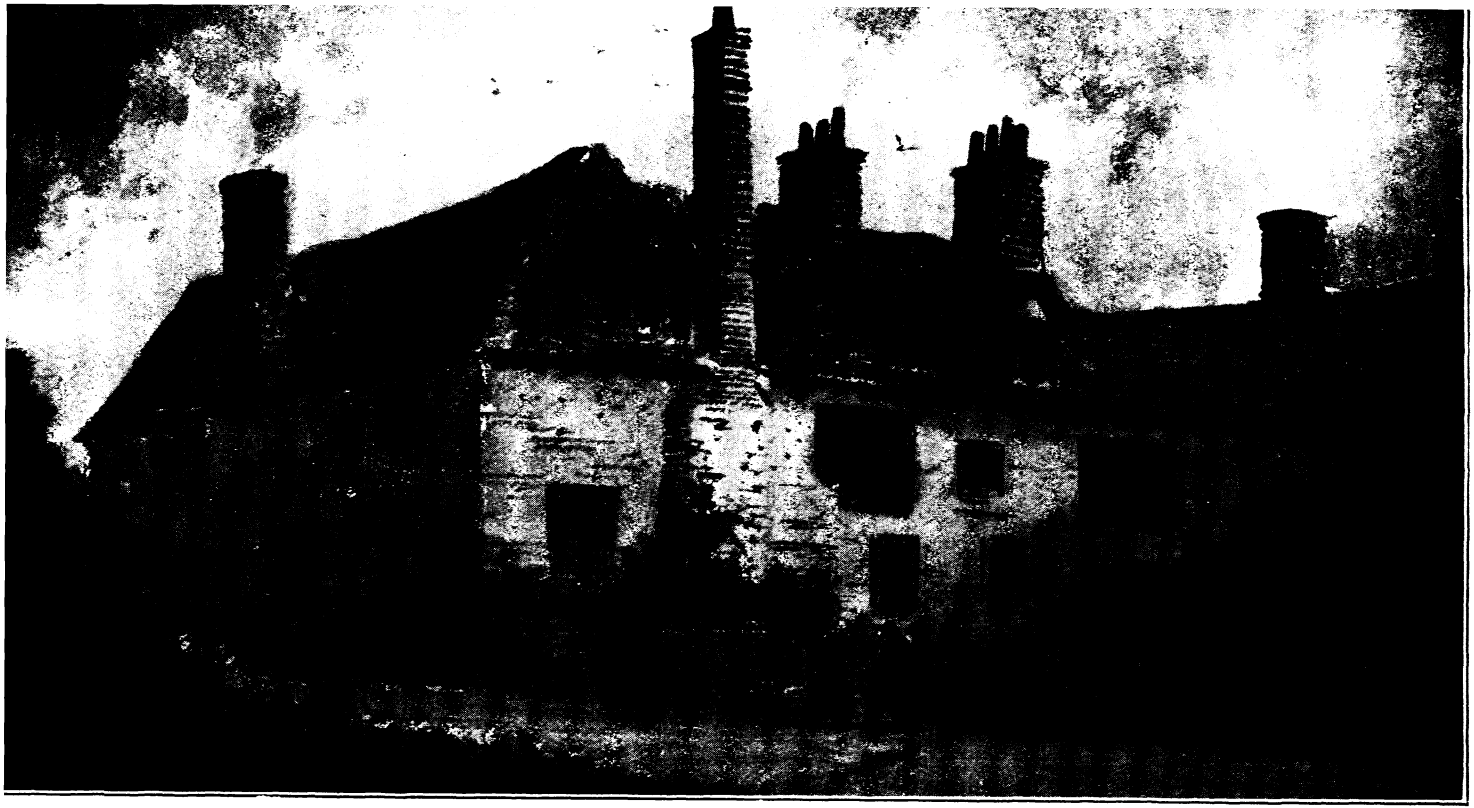
xxi. The present mansion has been excellently described and portrayed in two articles written by H. Avray Tipping for *Country Life*, October 17 and 24, 1925.

on 'the old, far-off, unhappy things' of centuries ago. I have heard some good folk bring against the friars that same terrible of indictment which the poet Verhaeren put into the mouth Christ Himself:—

> 'You rot in torpid ease
> Behind a sleepy world of pieties,
> Drowsing the slow, monotonous hours away.
> You sleep and pray. Far off the trumpets blow
> War on my cross, whose wide arms long ago
> Embraced the world and pressed it to my heart.
> You play an ever-shrinking, sterile part,
> You stifle boundless ardours, virgin powers,
> The tongues of flame, which on my faithful few
> At Pentecost descended' (xxii).

There are those, on the other hand, who say that the heart of England will never be whole again till the old order is restored. But the student of history, however he revere the past, cannot fail to see the gradual evolution and amelioration of the human lot. There is nothing steady in one stay. Though it move slowly like the River Hiz, yet the world moves on. The only hope for man is to take the old stones and build anew after a better fashion. 'Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul.' It were a child's part, or a poet's merely, to weep because here not one stone lieth on another, because instead of the Friars' Grove the nettles flourish in thousands, because of all the former sanctity and splendour only a fragile memory plays over a fleeting stream.

xxii. *Le Cloître*, Act 1. I have slightly varied Arthur Symons's rendering.



THE BIGGIN IN 1767

From a painting by Paul Braddon

THE BIGGIN (i)

I

A FEW paces southward from St. Mary's Church, on the bank of the River Hiz, there stands an ancient, half-timbered house known as the Biggin. 'Stands' is perhaps too dignified a word for this decrepit building, for it seems rather to crouch like some beggar over the stream and stare at its sallow image in the water. This quiet haunt of the town is seldom visited now; and those who do stray into its precincts come out in a sort of dazed wonderment, and not much wiser for what they see. For one thing, they are puzzled by the name. If they consult the guide-book, they are transported across the Channel to find a derivation in the French word *Béguine*, i.e. a praying woman, so called from St. Begga, daughter of Pipinus, Duke of Brabant, the founder, it is said, in A.D. 698 of an Order of lay-women who, without binding themselves to strict vows, chose to dwell in small, secluded habitations such as this and devote themselves to the religious life (332. 3). Others, not venturing so far back, will assure them that the Order was founded by Lambert le Bègue, i.e. the stammerer, a priest of Liége in the twelfth century. If, still in doubt, the strangers go across the way to inquire of the parish historian, he will confuse them further. 'An attractive theory,' he will admit, 'this derivation from the French; and some colour is lent to it by the fact that in deeds and manor rolls the property is so often written down as *Beguin*. But, though at one time a religious house, it is pretty certain that no nuns and no lay-sisters ever inhabited there.' Then, pulling down from its shelf his copy of Blount's *Glossary*, 1681, he will add: 'In these matters it is always safer to take the plainest and most prosaic explanation. Hear what this old philologist says: "Biggin or Bigging in the northern parts is used for a fair house or a Gentleman's Seat."

i. The author is indebted to Miss Rose Graham, author of *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertines, a History of the only English Monastic Order*, 1903, for reading this chapter in manuscript and for making many valuable suggestions for its amendment.

Moreover, if you turn up the *New English Dictionary*, you will find that use of the word current three centuries before, and not limited to any part of England. A dull derivation indeed, if put beside the other, but it is all I can offer you, and to my thinking it is clinched by the fact that you meet with so many *New Biggings*, i.e. new buildings, up and down the country. In fact, this very house, in some of the early documents, is referred to as the Priory of New-Bigging.'

If, still more dissatisfied with this humdrum historian, they cross-question the eighteen almswomen at the house itself, they will probably hear eighteen other explanations, more likeable if not so likely. 'The word Biggin,' said one of these old ladies to the present writer, 'is short for "Beginning," for this was the first house to be built in Hitchin.' 'You are wrong,' corrected another; 'it has to do with Biggin, which is an old English word for a close-fitting cap, such as children and us old women wear.'

Over the uses to which the building has been put the same uncertainty prevails. It is variously reported as having been a school, a workhouse, a pest-house, a private mansion and a nunnery. Chauncy, the county historian, who should have known better, describes it as a Benedictine house. Clearly there is need for someone to set down the truth of this matter, or such poor remnant of the truth as 'the dark veil of forgetfulness' allows us still to see.

II

For the foundation of the Priory of St. Saviour, New Bigging, Hitchin, it is needful to go back to 1361. Towards the close of that year, Sir Edward de Kendale, Lord of Hitchin Manor, wishing to do honour to the memory of his father, obtained licence from King Edward III to grant a messuage, which was to be built anew—'*de novo construendo*,' a toft [i.e. an open space where a house once stood] and two acres of land called Beriorchard 'in the Vill of Hitche,' for the support of three Canons of the Order of St. Gilbert of Sempringham, of whom one was to be Prior. It was a condition of the grant that the Canons should celebrate Masses daily 'for the souls of the lord Edward of famous memory, lately king of England,' for the late Queen Isabella, and for Robert de Kendale

and Margaret his wife (295). A further licence was obtained in 1363 to transfer to this new and meagre foundation the advowson of Orwell Church in Cambridgeshire and certain lands there which Margaret de Kendale had intended to assign to the Warden and three Chaplains of the Chapel of St. Peter in the parish church of Hitchin (296). The Canons were given leave to appropriate the church at Orwell to their own uses; but apparently they were unable to obtain the Bishop's sanction to any such appropriation. Ten years later, 1372, they received a welcome addition to their endowments from one William Rous, chaplain, who paid the King twenty marks for leave to alienate to them in mortmain eight messuages, 363 acres of land (ii), a house known as 'le pounde house,' and three shillings of rent in Willian and Hitchin (297). That should have been enough, one might suppose, for the maintenance of so small a community of Canons. But for the generation which had endured the Black Death of 1349 and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 there was never enough and to spare. Besides, the Gilbertines, like the Cistercians, derived most of their income from the wool trade (iii), and for the time being the market in that was 'flat, stale and unprofitable.' It seems as though the Canons must have gone through hard times, for the statement in 1400 that Sir Robert Turk 'held a free Chapel in Hitchin called "le Bygyng"' inclines one to think that they had been obliged to mortgage even the house they dwelt in to this knight (iv) (298). On September 22, 1402, however, their good father the Pope came to their aid by empowering the Canons to 'choose eight priests, seculars and regulars, to hear the confessions of and give absolution to those penitents who on the feast of the Annunciation, between the first and second vespers, should visit and give alms for the conservation of the Priory Church'; and the Holy Father granted to such penitents

ii. The *Victoria County History for Herts*, vol. iv, p. 443, by an oversight prints 63 acres. Part of the property was known as Bray's Manor, of which a useful account has been written by the late H. F. Hatch (337).

iii. Altogether nineteen of the twenty-six Gilbertine houses had contracts to sell their wool to Flemish and Florentine merchants in the fourteenth century (Cunningham's *History of English Industry and Commerce*, vol. i, Appendix D, pp. 624–33).

iv. I have adopted this inference from the account in the *Victoria County History for Herts*, vol. iv, p. 443. But the wording of the inquisition—*Robertus Turk fuit verax patrō cujusdam [libere] capelle vocat' Bygynge in villa de Hycchen*—makes the assumption doubtful, to say the least of it.

the same indulgence as he was then giving to those who, on the first and second of August, visited the Church of St. Mary of the Portiuncula, Assisi, 'always excepting those cases upon which the Apostolic See has to be consulted' (299).

So much we do know concerning the origin of this Hertfordshire house of the only English Order. It is little enough; but of the cloister-life of the Canons we know still less. No Chapter records have survived, no chronicle of the community, no roll of benefactors. Some daring archæologists have ventured to point out where the Priory Church once stood; but it is only their surmise. Some of the almswomen take a pride in showing the narrow cells where the 'nuns' once slept; but these are only the domestic offices of the Elizabethan house that was raised upon their site. At this stretch of time it is even difficult to say whether the Priory was single, i.e. for canons only, or for nuns as well. The 'double' house was more usual in the earlier Gilbertine foundations, but of the thirteen priories founded after St. Gilbert's death all but Shouldham appear to have been single. It is true that Dugdale, Tanner (v), and other authorities have stated that the Biggin was a house for nuns and canons (313 & 317). But not one of the documents speaks of nuns or of a prioress; and it has to be remembered that by the Rule of the Order, unless there were at least seven canons there could be no double house. It is possible, of course, that the original number of canons was increased from three to seven (there might in a double house be as many as thirteen), but we have yet to pass from possibility through probability to proof (327. 57).

III

Happily it is possible from other sources to follow the life of a Gilbertine house as it went on hour after hour and day after day. There is John Capgrave's *Life of St. Gilbert*, the founder (335). There is the Rule which the Saint drew up at Clairvaux with the assistance of St. Bernard, and in the framing of which 'he took care not only of great and most needful

v. As Dugdale cites Tanner for his authority, it is all the more unfortunate that Tanner himself should give no more precise reference than to 'a MS. at Corpus College, Cambridge.' I have exhorted the librarian and Dr. M. R. James, who printed a catalogue of the Corpus MSS., to trace the manuscript in question, but their searches have met with no success (342).

matters, but did not leave out even the smallest and most humble.' And there is the invaluable monograph by Rose Graham entitled *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertines, a History of the only English Monastic Order* (327).

Here it would be out of place to dwell at any length on the Gilbertine Rule. But those who study it for themselves will find a severity of discipline beyond what one might expect in an English Order. 'Our father Gilbert,' writes Capgrave, 'gave them no hard precepts, nor lay no grievous burdens on their shoulders, which they should throw away afterward and repent to the great shame of themselves and great villainy to religion' (vi) (335. 72). But even this apologist allows that he 'learned them some of the sharpness of religion, as for example wretched meat, sharp cloth, no gay array, and confined them in cloister as in prison so that they should do no evil, but keep silence and be occupied with orisons and meditations' (335. 86). In the Convent of the Carmelites, higher up the Hiz, one does observe a certain activity and commerce with the world. There is a coming and going of travellers—schoolmen, mendicants, merchants and husbandmen. The children are taught; the clergy instructed; the Lollards confuted. In the Biggin, however, one hears only the monotone of the Canons at their prayers. It is a house of refuge 'out of this miserable world' for those who choose rather to be 'fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.' By this pious habit of seclusion, 'absent to secular things, and more present to everlasting desires,' they thought to observe the pious intention of their founder, 'who set them under regular discipline and kept them full busily, so that there should nothing outward break their peace in the cloister' (335. 96). To be at peace with God 'without any vexation or perturbing of soul,' to be 'shadowed from the winds of temptation,' to spend the time 'not with vain tales or flying tidings, but with Psalms and Orisons'—such was the rule of perfection which Gilbert had 'studied' for his 'solitary folk' (335. 72). It was for this, and for the blessed hope that some day they would be numbered 'into the catalogue of saints,' that they 'chose wilful poverty,' or, as he calls it in another place, 'honest poverty.' 'And honest poverty call we, that a man is not in mischief for his daily need, nor hath neither

vi. Rather than that any reader should stumble, I have offended against my better feelings and modernized Capgrave's spelling.

no great superfluity of good.' If by the grace of God any superfluity befell, and that was rare, indeed, amongst the Gilbertines, the surplus was devoted not to the Canons, who were not allowed to possess anything, nor to the Priory, but 'to the poor of Christ, to provide soft beds and coverings for them when they came to lodge at the hostel.' They themselves were to rest contentedly on hard beds of straw 'like those of the Cistercians' (327. 63).

Sleeping or waking, their whole life was made hard and unrestful for them by the deliberate design of St. Gilbert. It was in the church as in the cloister and refectory. They were to worship in the beauty of holiness; but there was to be no other beauty (vii). The Rule forbade all music, the organ and every kind of chant: 'They shall say the Psalms in monotone in the spirit of humility, rather than pervert the minds of the weak like the daughter of Herodias' (327. 74). No sculptures, no 'superfluous' pictures were to be installed there, 'because whilst attention is paid to such things, the usefulness of holy meditation and the discipline of religious gravity is often neglected.' The altar crosses, so frequently wrought of gold and inlaid with precious stones, were here of painted wood. The glorious company of lights, which in the parish church were lit Sunday by Sunday to the splendour of God, here in the Biggin were restricted to the four chief seasons of the Christian year (327. 74).

It is true the Rule had its alleviations. There were the processions round and about the Priory Church on the fourteen festivals of the Order. There were the seventeen days in the year when the Canons were assembled to be shaved. There were the four occasions when they were bled, and those comfortable days in the infirmary afterwards when the rigour of the two spare meals was tempered to their weak condition (327. 63). There were the appointed times for the distribution of new clothes, viz. the pelisse, now known as the cassock; the white cloak or pallium and the hood, with two pairs of gaiters reaching above the knees; and day and night shoes of red leather (viii).

vii. St. Gilbert's dread of beauty was carried to excess. Even the horse belonging to the Priory were to be docked of their tails and their manes that they might look unsightly (327. 67).

viii. If anyone refused a garment because he did not like the colour or thought it too short or too full, he went without it for a year. The same penalty awaited him who lost his clothes, unless they were indispensable (327. 70).

A CANON REGULAR OF THE ORDER OF ST. GILBERT

Reproduced from an engraving by W. Finden, after W. Hollar, in Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 1840–46, vol. vi, pt. 2, plate next after page 943

There were the days of healthy, out-of-door farmwork at Willian and Orwell, unbroken sleep in the granges there of a night, and indulgence from some of the canonical hours (327. 66). Occasionally some visitor of consequence would come; and then, 'if anything is to be spoken which cannot be indicated by signs, we allow speech concerning the domestic matters of our profession.' Once or twice a year also the Canons and novices might speak 'privately' with their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons or daughters, and with other near kinsfolk if 'of mature age'; but the privacy was somewhat spoilt by the presence of two witnesses who saw and heard everything that passed (327. 56). Otherwise those who dwelt in Gilbertine houses were to receive no one from the outer world, 'for they that run so about bring clattering tidings,' which might impair the souls of those who prayed in peacefulness within.

IV

In an Order so enclosed and so stern in the subordination of the individual, it would be surprising if any canon dared or cared to exalt himself above his brethren and make a name for himself in the world. At the Priory of the Carmelites it was otherwise. But here amongst the Gilbertines there are no names that stand out for the astonishment of after-times. Why learning should not have been cherished amongst them it is difficult to see. But that 'holy rest of Contemplation' which St. Gilbert aspired after was made next to impossible by his own decrees. If the Canons desired to read, they must read 'not apart in corners,' but 'all together in a place appointed by the Prior, the face of one to the back of the other, each with his own book.' And each must throw back his hood so that it could be seen at a glance if he should fall asleep (327. 60). In the same way, if any desired to write, it must be mere scrivener's work or a copy of some book of hours, or a service book for use in the Priory Church (ix). That anyone should wish to write out of his own imagining, or for the sake of fame, was an incredible exhibition of pride for which penance had

ix. Where there was no scriptorium, and there certainly was none at the Biggin, this copying work was to be done in the cloister. But the Canons were allowed to go to the common-room now and then to dry their parchments by the fire and get some life at the same time into their frozen fingers.

been ordained: 'He who writes secretly shall atone for his fault in the Chapter, and shall eat seven days on the floor of the frater with one dish, and on the sixth day with bread and water' (327. 60).

If only the Prior had allowed one of the Canons from time to time to keep the annals of this house, there might be some thing to break the silence that shrouds its history for one hundred and thirty years. Of the Gilbertine Priory at Chicksands, seven miles away, we do know many things. Of the Priory of St. Saviour at Hitchin from 1402 until the Dissolution we know next to nothing. If it was vouchsafed to these Canons to live together 'without any vexation or perturbing of soul,' they must be held fortunate indeed, for in this fallen world the cause of true religion did never yet run smooth. Moreover, from the beginning the Order had had its enemies. There were those who could speak of it as 'a certain abominable sect of evil-minded men named the Order (let us rather say the Error) of Sempringham, lately arisen by inspiration of him who soweth all evil deeds.' There were those who were jealous of the favours shown by the English kings to this only English Order (327. ch. v). And, in addition to these enemies without, there were the enemies within, for to some the Rule of St. Gilbert proved too grievous to be borne; and always, just outside their grey, forbidding walls, beckoned the alluringly unruly, gaily-coloured world, with its sleek, well-fed citizens clad in soft raiment, its merchant-adventurers and minstrels and Morris-dancers, its 'captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, and horsemen riding upon horses,' its glorious company of bowmen, its women bewitchingly fair. 'With lighted candles,' St. Gilbert had commanded, 'ye shall strike with anathema all who conspire against the Order, or stir up strife in the houses.' But in the fifteenth century anathema and excommunication had not the same terror for evil-doers as they had in the twelfth; and everywhere it seemed as if faith and fervency began to cool and discipline to grow more lax.

It is clear also that this Priory was sinking below the standard of 'honest poverty' and was 'in mischief for its daily need.' One would have expected Englishmen to stand by their own people and give generously to an Order which squandered nothing on religious luxuries and sent no money oversea. But in the wills of the Hitchin citizens of this period there are next

to no bequests to the Biggin (x). No dying sinner pays to be shrouded in their saving habit and buried in their cloister garth. No living saint comes forward to replenish their flocks and their herds when the all-destroying murrain has swept by. No Holy Father grants another indulgence to help them in their need. They are left at St. Saviour's to save themselves. And so one by one the lands at Orwell have to be sold away, and some of the 'ruinous tenements' at Hitchin. The farm at Willian, lying so handily, they endeavour for a time to carry on; but by 1521 they are beaten by bad years and obliged to lease it with their grange to Richard Yerdeley. At the Dissolution all that the Canons had in hand was 'our one piece of land called "a garden place"' (303).

V

According to Browne Willis, the Prior of Chicksands took the oath of the King's Supremacy on October 22, 1534; and it is probable that John Mounton, the last Prior of the Hitchin Gilbertines, subscribed on the same day (327. 165). It was the beginning of the end. On December 22, 1535, Dr. Richard Layton, one of the four chief Commissioners appointed by Cromwell to visit the monasteries, forced his way into Chicksands Priory. But the nuns there declined to recognize his authority and were, as he alleges, 'confederate' to conceal their crimes. Trusting to the hearsay of an old beldame in the village, and disregarding all denial, he satisfied himself that two of the nuns had been guilty of incontinence (327. 170). For the sake of the truth it is perhaps as well that the record of the Hitchin Visitation has been lost. That of Dr. Thomas Legh in respect of 'a pryory namyd Byggyn in the towne of Fordham' is, however, surviving; and, if one could believe it generally true, it would go far to justify the crime of the

x. John Sperhawke, 1472, bequeaths 'to any priest of the parish church of Hitchin who will undertake the sacred office in conjunction with Dominus William of Bygging 4s., on condition that they pray for me for 30 days in succession.' In 1519 William Chambers bequeaths '4s. to the house of Bygging,' but he gives as much as 20s. to the Carmelites of Hitchin Priory. Some Hitchin testators are mean and disloyal enough to pass over the needs of the poor Gilbertines in their own parish and add to the riches of the Gilbertines at Chicksands, e.g. John Smyth, 1521, who says: 'I will to the nonnes of Chickesand they for to pray for me as a brother of their place, 13s. 4d.' (300).

Dissolution: 'I desyre you to send me worde,' he writes to Cromwell, 'what shall be doon with thes relygyous persons whiche, knelying on their knees, howldyng up ther handes, instantly with humble petycyon desyre of God, the Kyng, and you, to be dymyssyd from ther relygyon, saying they lyve in yt contrary to Goddys lawe and ther conscyens, trustyng that the King of hys gracyous goodnes and you wyll set them at lybertye oute of this bondage which they ar not able lenger to endure' (327. 171). In March of the following year (1536) the King declared before Parliament that he had knowledge of the evil lives of those in the smaller monasteries, 'as well by the compertes [i.e. reports] of the late visitation as by sundry credible informations'; whereupon the Lords and Commons, 'by a great deliberation,' resolved 'that it is and shall be much more to the pleasure of God' that the property of these religious 'should be converted to better uses, and the unthrifty persons so spending the same be compelled to reform their lives' (27 Hen. VIII, c. 28).

The Gilbertine houses were not destined to fall with the smaller monasteries. It seems that Robert Holgate, the Master of the Order, had once been Chaplain to Cromwell, and still retained enough influence with him to stave off the impending ruin (xi). But it was a respite only. It is evident that the surrenders were expected any moment, for in 1536 one Ralph Morice submitted a petition for the grant of the Hitchin Biggin. He writes, as petitioners are wont to do, *in forma pauperis*, but he was, in fact, says Strype, 'a very considerable person, and of good birth, son of James Morice of Roydon in the County of Essex,' and for twenty years in all he acted as secretary to Cranmer. In his petition, which is addressed to Cromwell, he is careful to praise 'this happie worlde of goodly reformation' and 'your contynuall travaill,' beside which 'Hercules labours seme but mere trifles.' For himself he is most unwilling 'to put your Lordship to further cumberance,' but 'having both wif and children, yearly growing unto a more nombre, and without any certentie of lyvyng, I am compelled and dryven

xi. The last Master of Sempringham, like the last Provincial of the Carmelites, betrayed his Order and worked for his own hand. Though he is the part author of *The Institutes of a Christian Man*, written in 1537, his dealings with Cromwell in that year do not bear looking into. Howbeit, he flourished abundantly, and accumulated a bishopric, an archbishopric and a wife before he died (321. 2).

thus shamefully to seke for thair necessitie; or els I counte myself no better than a castaway, my chaunce in sutes hath hitherto ben so evill' (xii). As he has 'no dispaire of your Lordship's good mynde towards me,' or of the King's 'most accustomable bountiousness,' he considers it not improper to ask for some reward 'for my poor service done in his highness' affaires.' 'I seke but for deformed Lia [i.e. Leah], leaving faire Rachell unto others who hath done longer or better service than I, meaning thereby that a small lyving is competent enough for my vocation.' And so, not to be tedious, he comes to his conclusion, which is to ask for 'a lease of the Sell in Hychyn named Byggyngs twenty nobles under the rent surveyed.' 'For the whiche both I and my poore wyf and children, both young and old, shall daily pray for the long preservation of his highness estate to contynewe in moche honour and prosperitie.' As Morice was unable to present his petition in person, 'being dayly and hourly busyed in wrytyng the ordynances of the kynges highnes Colleges,' he begged Cromwell 'to declare your pleasor concernyng the premises unto myne old acquayntance and frend Mr. Ames, your servante' (301).

VI

Once again Morice's 'chaunce in sutes' was to prove 'evill.' In 1536 Cromwell was not disposed to take the Biggin, or indeed any Gilbertine house, into the King's hand. And besides, he saw no sufficient reason why this secretary should have the spoil. It was not until 1538 that the Gilbertine Order was dissolved. The parent community at Sempringham surrendered on September 18th that year (327. 192). Chicksands Priory surrendered on October 22nd, and the surrender of Hitchin, though not extant, was probably signed the same

xii. 'The Archbishop,' says Strype, 'as a token of the good will he bore him did procure him a lease of the parsonage of Ospring in Kent, being an impropriation belonging unto St. John's College in Cambridge, worth better than 40 marks by the year *de claro*. But when the lease was prepared and ready to be sealed, one Hawkins of the Guard, by his importunate suit, got Henry VIII to obtain it of the college to be sealed for the use of him the said Hawkins. The Archbishop then solicited the King in his servant's behalf, and the King promised him that he would recompense Morice for the same with like value or better. Which was never done, the King dying before he did anything for him' (318).

day (327. 194). Unfortunately, the Hitchin Prior, John Mounton, was sent up to the Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations to report for himself upon the possessions of his house; whereby we have lost many valuable particulars concerning the furnishings of the Biggin and the vestments, plate, bells and ornaments within the Priory Church. We only know that Mounton was granted a pension for himself of £4 a year until such time as he should obtain an ecclesiastical benefice of equal value (302).

For the space of eight years the property of the Biggin remained in the hands of the King, and in its ruinous condition went from bad to worse. The annual value, estimated in 1535 at £13 16s., by 1545 had sunk to £10 11s. 8d. In that year John Cocks, of Broxbourne (xiii), who had just purchased the King's Manor of Maydencroft at Hitchin and was doing a roaring trade in priory lands all over the country, agreed with His Majesty to pay £254 12s. 9d., 'with which,' says the King, 'we are fully contented and satisfied,' for 'the whole house and scite of the late Priory of Byggyng and all houses, buildings, yards, orchards, gardens, pools, fish-ponds, land and soil within the scite, enclosure, ambit, circuit and precinct of the same.' The description of these in the grant, which is dated from Hampton Court and witnessed by Katharine, Queen of England, runs to several pages; but apart from the Biggin itself, then in extreme decay, there passed only a mansion in Bancroft known as 'Barkers Dalles Place,' with its surrounding three acres of land, eighteen cottages, of which some were let for as little as 16d. a year, and the Canons' 'one piece of land,' already referred to and known as 'the garden place' (303). It was stipulated in the deed that Cocks was to hold the property (which apparently included a manor of the Priory of the Biggin) as of the Royal Manor of Hitchin, and pay each Feast of St. Michael the quit-rents specified for the same.

It is not known how Cocks broke up the property; but there are grounds for thinking that he sold some of it to William Croocar of Hitchin, who by will dated 1570 bequeaths 'the house called the Byggyn to Thomas and William my sonnes'

xiii. He was Sheriff of the county in 1548, Member for the county along with Sir Ralph Sadleir, of Temple Dinsley near Hitchin, in 1553, and Master of Requests to both Edward VI and Queen Mary (8. vol. i. 35, 47, 217, 539, 562; vol. ii, 398).

(xiv) (300). They cannot have held it long, however, for by the following decade it had become the residence of Robert Snagge, the second son of Thomas Snagge, of Letchworth Hall, sometime Speaker of the House of Commons, 1588–92 (321. 3). Distinguished in the world as a Bencher of the Middle Temple and Member for Lostwithiel, Robert Snagge is remembered here as the man who pulled down the old New Biggin and built a new New Biggin, which now in its turn has become the Old Biggin as we behold it in our day. It was thought until recently that he had not allowed a single stone or timber of the earlier building to stand. But the discovery in 1907 of a fourteenth-century window, all in oak and apparently *in situ*, on the south front of the Biggin, and the fact that this is part and parcel of a timber-framed structure of that period pointing eastward in its length, has inclined the experts to revise their former opinions and to identify this portion of the house as the ancient Priory Church. To the present writer, who objected that this window might be an interpolation only and that it stood too near the roof to be *in situ*, Mr. Walter Millard, the architect consulted at the time of the discovery, cogently replies: 'Why should any level-headed builder spend labour in pulling down a good block of sound building framed in oak when it could be adapted to fresh use by the exercise of a little common sense and contrivance? Moreover, as the window of a chapel, it would be rightly set high up in the wall close beneath the eaves.' It is a problem that can be resolved only by stripping off the rest of the defective plaster on the south front. But in the meantime we may cherish the pleasant surmise that here after all we do possess the battered and disguised relic of the ancient Priory Church. If so, and if the existing courtyard should prove to represent the cloister, we should have here in Hitchin one more example of a north side cloister (340).

Not much has dropped through the chinks of time concerning

xiv. The initials W. C. and I. C., which may be those of William Croocar, Jr., and his wife, are cut on the panelling of Room 16 over the fire, with the date 1585 between them. The panelling there is evidently older than the house, and one must assume that it belonged to the Priory and was reused by Robert Snagge when, soon after 1585, he built or rebuilt the present house. An American dealer once offered £400 for the panelling in this room. 'The Trustees,' replied Samuel Lucas, 'do not sell.' It is to be hoped they never will. And it is to be hoped that some time they will bring into view the rest of the panelling now hidden beneath plaster and paper in nearly every room.

Robert Snagge, but it is to be feared that in his new mansion he did not succeed in living 'without any vexation or perturbing of soul,' as, for the most part, the Gilbertines had done in theirs. It may be that he built beyond his means, and there are certain documents which go to show that he suffered from those who, in the contemporary description of Beaumont and Fletcher, 'cut the throats of heirs with cozening mortgages' (305). Something, at any rate, had filled him with loathing for the lower orders of his profession, and he indulged this so far as to paint caricatures of them on the panels of an upper room, now No. 14, and point the finger of scorn in couplets overhead. In their present condition it is hard to make these out, and even if they were clearer the writer of this book, being himself a lawyer, would hardly appreciate their spitefulness and sting. One, now faded beyond recall, is sufficiently described in the scroll, which can be read :—

> 'Two lawyers thus their clients doe uphold
> Till they consume, and their estates be sold.'

Another, which was modelled on the fable of the monkey that used the cat's paw to get the chestnuts out of the fire, is thus applied :—

> 'Such apes wee have, that will expose their friends
> To venture all that they may have their ends.'

It is a relief to find one or two pictures in this gallery not taken up with attorneys and their knavish tricks. There is one violent scene of knaves at large in the thoroughfares of the world, wrestling with one another for gain, and trampling the poor and honest underfoot :—

> 'What paynes men take, for wealth what harme they doe
> And undergoe, that they may wealthy grow.'

At one time there was another which surely must have been inspired by the fate of the Biggin so recently despoiled and dispossessed. It was an allegorical representation of the Church in the figure of a woman, her features marred, her body partly dismembered by the cruel hands of those reformers and counter-reformers who martyred her on every side :—

> 'Oh ! greife and shame to be now pluckt and torne,
> By those who were of mine owne body borne.'

There is a third which may portray the owner and his wife. She stands at the door of the house, watching her husband as he walks away, and out of her mouth there issues this sound advice :—

> ' In things abroad be ye a wary man ;
> At home I'll be as thrifty as I can.'

VII

If this homely counsel was intended for Robert Snagge, it is a pity that he did not take it, for a little wariness would have saved him out of all his troubles. That they might have been avoided is evident from a letter which he addressed to the Lord High Treasurer of England (William Cecil) from ' my pore house in Hitchin this XXVIIth of Auguste 1587 ' (304). He styles the Biggin his ' pore house ' in contradistinction to Cecil's palatial mansion of Theobalds (' Tyboldes,' he spells it), which he had visited not long before on another ' emergent ocation.' This time the trouble is concerned with ' the discharge of my thankles office of justice of peace. I am informed that your honour, hir majesty's honorable privie counsell, yea and hir Majestie hir-selfe have bin informed that I am a contencious person and a contempnor of my betters, which greveth me greatly.' Then in a rather laboured self-defence he sets out to ' repaier my pore credytt where my foes have battered yt, especially with hir majestie, for I desier no longer to lyve then with her goode likinge, and to be hir good, faithfull and loyall subjecte as forwardly as any of any place and abylitie.' In the end he takes this comfort to his soul : ' The worste that my foes, thanke God, can charge me with is not injustice, unhoneste or uncomelie lyfe, but that I could not beare with my foes in discension, nor would leave my friendes for polycie.' And therefore he looks to ' your lordship to be my schilde and defence, and will daylie praye to the Almyghtie for your preservacioun and goode successe, in all honour, to the glory of God, the goode of this realme, and your owne everlastinge comforte ' (304).

In the year 1606 Robert Snagge departed out of this troublesome life, having outlived most of his enemies, and her most trying Majesty the Queen, and her most inquisitorial Treasurer.

His wife, whose 'thrift at home' had kept the lawyers and the mortgagees at bay, had predeceased him. There were apparently no children. In his will therefore, which is home-drawn and so characteristic of the maker that it deserves to be copied in full, one finds him mainly occupied about his soul and in parting the few worldly goods which remained to him amongst his faithful and influential friends. Here in its beginning is the confession of his faith: 'Touching my person that is to be dissolved by deathe, I remytte my soule to God that made it ymmortall and my mortall bodye to the earthe whereof it was made in hope throughe the merytts of Christe Jesus my alone Saviour to be againe the same man in the generall resurrection that I am nowe, all synnes and blemishes wasshed and wiped oute by the blood of that lambe and then to lyve for ever in his eternall kingdome with him as one of his Saintes, whereof I have assurance in that forme that is sette downe in the articles agreed upon in the Parlyamente the thirteenthe yeare of her majestie's raigne as the publique profession of the Church of Englende (whereof I am a member) and consente therewith and accordinge to the creede called the Apostle's creede. And touchynge a memoryall of my freindes that I ever founde kinde and constante, and forgeivinge and forgettynge the unkindenes of the reste, I doe appointe and will to the moste honourable and reverend Father in God John, by God's providence Archebishoppe of Canterburye, Prymatte and Metropolytane of All Englande, Sir Edmund Anderson, knighte, Lord Chief Justice of the common pleas, Julius Caesar, Doctor of the Lawes, one of the Masters of the Requestes to her Majestie, Edwarde Cooke Esquire, her Majestie's Attorney Generall, Thomas Fanshawe Esquire, her Majestie's Remembrancer in her Court of Exchequer, John Sparlinge, Serjeante at Lawe, John Brograve, her Majestie's Attorney of the Duchie, George Rotherham Esquire, my adopted brother, my famylier from his childehoode and to mistres Elizabeth Snagge, widdowe, late wife to my brother Sergeante Snagge such severall legacies or remembrances as in a Schedule annexed to that coppie of my will that shall remayne with me shall be appointed and sette downe (xv), which persons I

xv. Unfortunately this schedule has not been preserved at Somerset House and is not to be found amongst the family collections compiled by His Honour Judge T. Mordaunt Snagge, to whose kindness I am not a little indebted for other information concerning Robert Snagge.

especyallie remember at my deathe that they never changed their affectyons towards me for any prefermente of them nor faulte of myne.'

Then follows the clause which more particularly concerns this chapter: 'For the love and kyndenes that my sister Anne Dallison, widdowe, hath alwayes borne to me onelie of all my kynne I will and bequeathe to her my mannor house and capitall messuage called the Biggin where I dwell to her and her heirs for ever, which Mannor house or messuage is holden of the Mannor of Hitchin to the rent of two shillings sixe pence, in soccage and not *in capite*' (300).

VIII

As for the sub-manor of the Biggin, it was sold that same year by Thomas Cocks to Ralph Radcliffe of Hitchin Priory, in whose family it has since remained (50. 2. 54). For some time to come the Courts continued to be held. Indeed, as late as 1747 the Steward is still summoning 'a court for the mannor of the Pryor of the Biggin' at the Swan Inn. But there appears to have been no business to do, except to drink to the memory of the long-deceased and long-dissolved Prior, which on that occasion cost 9s. 4d. to do (310). To trace the descent of the 'Capitall messuage' is not quite so easy, for some of the documents are missing. But it is clear that Dame Dallison and her heirs for ever did not eternally enjoy the Biggin. By 1635, if not before, the house had come into the ownership and occupation of Joseph Kempe, who founded there a community of scholars, or in plain words a school, that had a wide reputation in its day.

It has always been believed that Joseph was the son of that William Kempe who, after graduating M.A. at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, in 1584, settled as a schoolmaster in Plymouth, and there wrote two educational treatises now excessively rare: *The Education of Children in Learning. Declared by the Dignitie, Utilitie and Method thereof*, 1588, dedicated to William Hawkins, the Mayor of Plymouth; and *The Art of Arithmetic in Whole Numbers and Fractions*, 1592, dedicated to Sir Francis Drake (321. 5). If in adopting the profession of a schoolmaster Joseph Kempe was following in the footsteps of his father, in opening a school at the Biggin he was doing something not less in keeping

with the spirit of the place, for St. Gilbert himself, though as a youth he had been 'heavily afflicted with the labour of learning,' and had run away from home when chidden by his parents, came in after-life 'to trade with the talent of knowledge,' and kept a school where not only the boys but even the girls were said to gain a knowledge of Latin (327. 4–5). Though he provided by his will for girls, Kempe in his lifetime observed the tradition of the Biggin and drew up his Rule for boys only. With them his 'trade in knowledge' was extensive. His pupils came from every part of England, and only ran away from him to enter themselves at Cambridge, some at Gonville and Caius, some at Christ's, his own college, but most of them at St. John's (323. 334). They seem also to have come from good families: Simon Cleaver, of Weedon, Bucks; John Raven, of Henlow, Beds; Richard Edwards, of Arlesey, Beds; Maurice Walden, of Huntingdon; William Bonner, of Maidenwell, Lincs; Periam Docwra, of Putteridge Park, who were 'bred at Hitchin under Mr. Kempe' between 1640 and 1652, are all described as gentlemen's sons. The father of Ralph Milbanke, who was a merchant at Newcastle, chose for some legitimate or illegitimate reason to disguise himself as Mark 'W.' Of those people whose after-career it is still possible to follow, John Felton appears to have brought his master the most credit. After six years' study at the Biggin School, he became first scholar, 1650, and then Dean, 1656, of Gonville and Caius. When he died early in his thirties, it was comprehensively said of him that he was 'a profound theologian, a subtle philosopher, an ornate mathematician, a sweet musician, an elegant orator, and a pleasing poet' (323). Kempe, though a Master of Arts and the son of a Master of Arts, was no magician. To turn all his gentlemen's sons into such Admirable Crichtons was quite beyond his power. But he gave them as good a grounding as they could have expected in their day. And it is to be further remembered in his honour that he kept his 'school for young gentlemen' going in this Puritan stronghold of Hitchin right through the turmoil of the Civil War, and went on teaching the King's English when the King himself was dead.

His protectorate of little boys in the Biggin ceased just as Oliver's Protectorate began. He died on August 3, 1654. In the rather florid inscription upon the memorial in St. Mary's, 'which was erected with tears by his most duteous widow

Anna,' the passing of this grammarian is put less starkly. 'Joseph Kempe of honoured reputation [we translate from the Latin with apologies to this schoolmaster, who would have done it so much better] having stripped off his earthly tabernacle, lays it aside and leaves this mortal stage. . . . That the people might not perish, the Joseph of History ruled the affairs of those who dwelt in Egypt. Our Joseph ruled the affairs of his own people. His wealth goes to enrich those who have no wealth. His bones are in the keeping of the tomb; his soul is in the keeping of the Almighty; his name and fame are in the keeping of England' (306).

IX

In another part of this epitaph tribute is paid to Kempe's 'pious and charitable disposition,' which shines out more perfectly, however, in the will which he signed just before he died (300). The confession of faith with which this opens is not so comprehensive as that of Robert Snagge, and there is a certain schoolmasterliness about its phrasing. But there is no doubt of the piety from which it springs (xvi). 'I believe myself,' he says, 'to be saved both in bodie and soule through the death and perfect obedience both active and passive of my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus, and only by his merritts doe expect everlasting joy.'

With the distribution of 'that part and portion of worldly goods and chattels which it hath pleased God to lend me,' he fills many foolscap pages, for his school had proved successful and there was more than a thousand pounds in English land and English money to leave. In passing to what concerns this chapter, we may stay to notice the bequests 'of the summe of thirtie poundes to my loveing Frend and assistant-Master, Biker,' and 'five poundes unto my loveing Frend and assistant-Master, Richard Swansey.' To young William Draper, son of his neighbour Daniel Draper, he gives 'monie sufficient to buy him a Sizer's Gowne att his first admission into any Colledge in the University of Cambridge, and a yearly stipend of fiftie shillings during the first fower years of his residence there.' To the Free School which his friend John Mattock had founded in 1632, 'whereof I having taken Consideration and Conceiving

xvi. It should perhaps be recorded that Kempe had been ordained as priest at Peterborough in 1630.

the same to be Needful and a pious worke,' he adds the endowment of a house in Maltmill Lane 'for the better maintenance of the said schoole and for the teaching and instruction of six poore Children of Hitchin in Literature and good learning.' And finally he devises and bequeaths, *inter alia*, 'my mansion or mannor house commonly called the Biggin to my trustie friends Ralph Skynner of Hitchin, Gentleman, and Robert Draper, Francis Audley, James Turner, Jeremy Carter and Nathaniel Hobbs of Hitchin, Yeomen, upon trust out of the income arising therefrom to lay forth and bestowe the summe of Tenne poundes of Current English monie amongst ten poore auncient or middle aged women whoe are and shall be of honest Conversation, and such as shall have in theire former tyme been diligent in some honest calling during bodilie abilitie, and after disabled, and that to be paid quarterlie to everie such wooman, 5s. And also shall during the Worlde yearlie and everie yeare bind and putt forth fower poore children out of the parish of Hitchen to be Apprentices in some honest Vocation with the summe of twentie pounds.' Any surplus income was to be administered as his trusty friends in their discretion should think wise. For their own gratification the yearly sum of forty shillings was 'to be dispended on a Convenient Dinner.' And for the better protection of the 'Writings, rent-rowles, evidences, muniments, Coppies of Court and Escripts whatsoever' belonging to their trust they were to provide 'Som strong Chest in the Church or some convenient roome about it' (xvii) (300).

According to his widow, Kempe left altogether £1,000 in 'lands and revenues,' in fact, all his savings, 'to the advancement in good learning and liberal arts of necessitous children in the said town and to the support of widows.' For her own support as his widow he would appear to have made a less bountiful provision. At the time of her death in 1662 she possessed 'within doores and without doores' no more than £20 19s. (307).

As for his scholars at the Biggin, though bereaved of their master, they were not left quite destitute of learning. By an arrangement with his father's trusty friends, John Kempe renounced his bloodthirsty trade of 'a sword-cutler at Graye's Inne gate,' returned to his old home and took over the

xvii. After reposing in secular hands for many years, this chest has recently been restored to the church.

Biggin school. Whether he succeeded in sharpening the wits of his boys as well as he had sharpened steel is not now to be known; but the school was carried on and continued beyond his day (xviii). That much is clear from St. Mary's burial register: '1665, Dec. 2nd. Buried William Walters, a boarder at the Biggin Schoole'; '1698, March 27th. Buried Robert Shrib, a schollar at the Biggin' (308). It was not until the next century that Kempe's school was closed down. In 1723 one finds the overseers asking leave to convert the Elizabethan mansion which Snagge had called his 'poore house' into a veritable poor-house for the parish. It seems that the House of Maintenance at the bottom of Tilehouse Street was full to overflowing; and neither the Pest-house at the Folly nor the infirmary at Starling's Bridge could contain the sick and dying as the increasingly virulent and frequent scourges of smallpox reappeared. It was agreed accordingly that Kempe's Biggin should be hired as an additional workhouse, and that 'Kempe's Widows' should be employed wherever possible in parish work. In the overseers' accounts from 1719 onwards, along with entries for 'mending the windows,' and 'mending the pump,' and sending in 'loads of straw' as a shake-down for the casuals, one can observe these widows at work earning their precious mite (311). Some helped out their quarterly allowance by taking care of the parish children: '1719. Paid Widow Taylor for boarding young Upton three weeks, 6s.: Paid Widow Nash for Joan Bigg's boy (xix): 1768. Paid Widow Anderson for boarding a boy who had the Measles, 2s. 6d.' Others did what they could in the way of nursing: '1728. To Widow Walter sitting up with Daniel Crout two nights and stripping him, 1s. 8d.: 1746. Paid Widow Park for one week for the travelling woman that lay in at her house, 8s.: 1763. Paid Elizabeth Beck for curing the children's heads, 11s. 3d.' And there were numerous odd jobs to which these women could be set. Widow Gamble, 1719, used to be given rushes to mend the workhouse chairs, and knitting-needles and black wool to mend the work-

xviii. In the safe keeping of John Moore, who in his time renewed so many of the Biggin windows, there is a quarry of old glass with John Kempe's name scratched on it and the date 1671.

xix. His mother, weary of existing on parish relief at one shilling a week, had destroyed herself. For more than a hundred years Joan Bigg's grave, situate at the junction of Highbury and Walsworth roads, was a recognized landmark in the parish.

house clothes; Widow Baldock, 1720, did the Pest-house washing; Widow Blows, 1722, did the ticking and the bedding; Widow Burdett, 1756, brewed the workhouse beer; Widow Sutton and others made shifts and shirts, and 'pettys, bodices and stomachers' for the orphan children of the town (311).

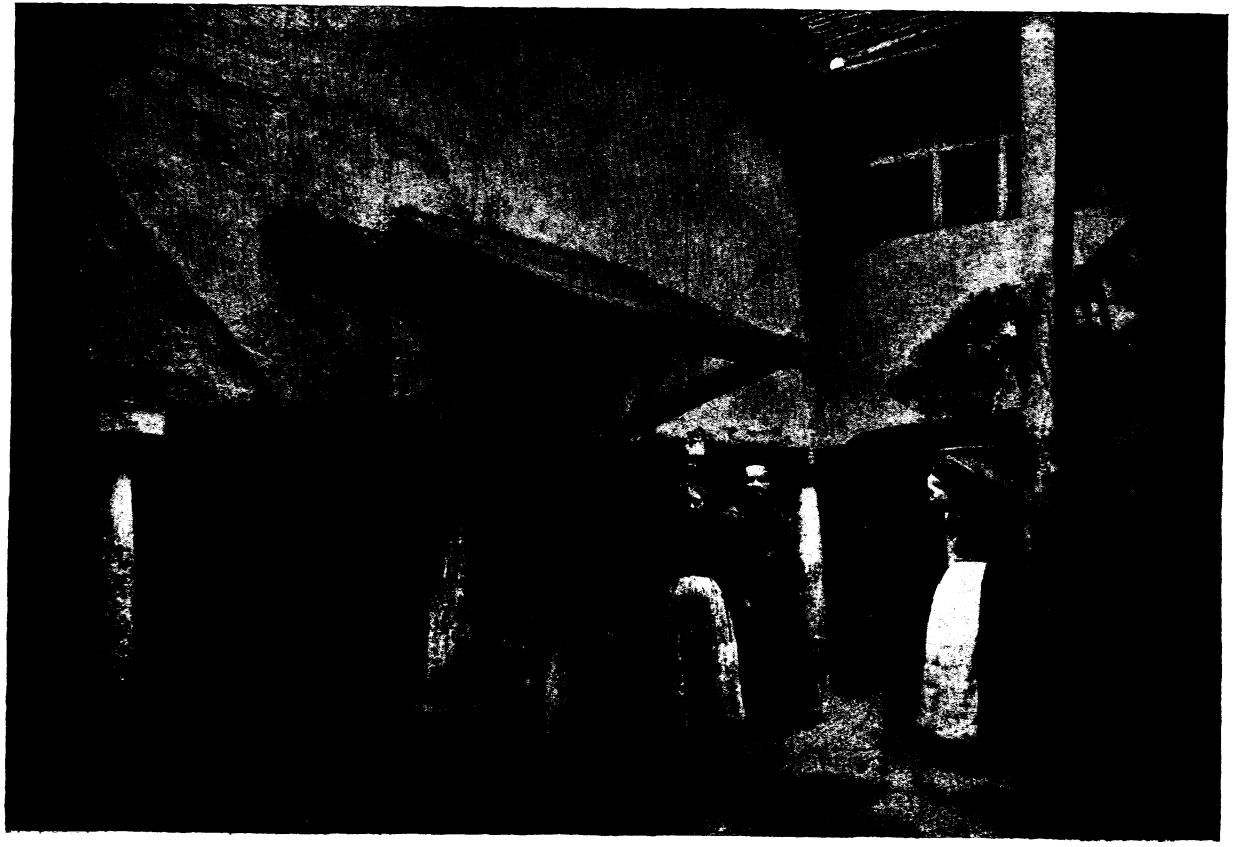
X

About the year 1812, however, the overseers purchased the Manor House in Bancroft for the residence of the poor, and the Biggin was no longer needed. Happily by that time, what with accumulations of rent, advantageous exchanges and profitable sales, Kempe's trustees were in a position to take the Biggin into their own hands, and provide their ancient, disabled women not only with the pittance of five shillings a quarter, but with an almshouse, where each in her own chamber might sit surrounded with the few goods and chattels she had salved from the wreckage of life's inclement sea (xx), and spend in this quiet backwater of dead calm the last of her declining years. Here again the Rule of St. Gilbert was instinctively obeyed; it was befitting the spirit of the place that the house whose founder had 'always received Christ as his guest in widows, old folk and sick and feeble' should be devoted to such pious uses (xxi).

To write of this enclosed order of almswomen is nearly as difficult as it was to write of the community of scholars and the community of Gilbertines before them. The records are not quite so meagre. But it is only the poor who can tell how the poor live; only the aged who can interpret the wrinkles of old

xx. These goods and chattels are not always 'few.' Old women are like children—they hate to part with things, however useless and unsightly they may be. In the pathetic clinging to life which increases in tenacity as life grows towards its end, these precious relics speak to them of better days. They will go on clinging to them till they die. There is one good soul I visit at the Biggin whose room is positively choked with trinkets and knick-knacks of the tawdriest description. The walls, the shelves, the tables and all the chairs but one are crammed with them. The one free chair is taken by the cat. Not once have I seen the old body herself sit down, and though I have drunk tea with her, I have not been invited to displace the cat or even crouch upon the floor. At one time she kept as many as five cats in her little room.

xxi. The last words of St. Gilbert were from Psalm cxii, 9: 'He has dispersed, he has given to the poor.' 'This is your duty for the future,' he said to his successor.



THE COURTYARD OF THE BIGGIN

age. Behind the massive door of the Biggin there is a little world within the world to which only the inmates have the key. In spite of the dead calm, one suspects that it may have beneath its surface its comedies, its tragedies, its tragi-comedies, its passions, its jealousies, its foolish ambitions, like the unenclosed world-community without. But it holds its secrets better. The mere visitor, the stranger at the gate, what can they know of intangible things like these? By patient observation as a sort of lay brother of the community, by taking your bread-charity or your dole of half a pound of tea, by drinking it slowly and sitting awhile with your gossip by the fire, by doing this from year to year and from room to room with each of the eighteen almswomen who are there, you may in time be half admitted to the freedom of their world. You will wonder sometimes if it is worth the pains. 'Feebly and fondly garrulous of better days,' they will hold you many an hour with their tale of the fine women they once were; or, touched with eloquent self-pity at the contrast, they will go through their whole catalogue of woes—the husband that sickened and died, the daughter that went wrong, the son that failed to support his mother in the infirmities of age. But patience must have its perfect way. And patience amongst these sometimes tiresome women will reveal a world of true qualities and unexpected charm. You learn to discover the character of these women as you discover that of the rooms in which they live. For a time you can see nothing but the hideous oleographs and the stained and shoddy paper on the walls. But patient study and a little enterprising exploration will reveal the panelling behind that paper, with traces of colour and marquetry work upon it, and behind that again may be found some painting in distemper wrought of the freshness of Elizabethan flowers, and last of all the strong and ruddy brick that gives the strength of its character to all.

That is why the almswomen make such excellent guides to those who would see the Biggin. They and their almshouse have grown old together. They have the intimacy and understanding of old friends. They know all its nooks and crannies, its moods, its murmurs, its sighs. They have the guide-book by heart, and they have in their heads a hundred and one odd things its writer never knew. They will describe to you the mantelpiece carved in marble that lies hidden behind a

plastered front in the now disused 'room of the borrowed light,' No. 13. They will discover for you an inlaid and painted panel door and some curious hinges to a cupboard in No. 12. They will find you the name of 'Samuel Beldam, 1746,' cut on the panelling of the ground floor; and there is one amongst them who can still mumble through the rhyme that was made in his dishonour :—

> 'Here rots the body of Samuel Beldam,
> Who regarded the poor but helped them seldom;
> A curse on the niggardly, piggardly souls
> That never put pennies in beggarmen's bowls.'

But it is in the attics, above all, that these almswomen excel. Since 1925 visitors have had to apply for the key to the Clerk of the Hitchin United Charities. Previously it had been kept at the Biggin; but the custody of this valuable perquisite occasioned so much jealousy amongst the women that the Trustees intervened. There was a doubt also at that time whether the attic floors were safe, and, though these have been patched-up since, it is still necessary to take heed to one's steps. But it is even more necessary to take heed to one's guide. 'This part of the house,' one of Kempe's widows assured me, 'was used as a prison for the nuns and is over nine hundred years old.' 'That is a long time,' I observed. 'No,' she replied, 'it is not so very long, young man. I am turned ninety myself, and it has gone quickly enough, I can tell you.' Then, pointing to a rough piece of timber straddled across the floor, she remarked: 'Just like a coffin, ain't it? They say that was used two ways: first as a rack for those nuns as wouldn't confess their sins, and then as a block to chop off the heads of them as wouldn't leave when the King wanted the house.' I learnt quickly enough that it is as much as one's own head is worth to throw even a semblance of doubt upon these statements; and indeed the place itself seems to corroborate all these women say. 'Why, sir,' as another said in self-justification, 'anything dreadful might have happened here.' After that it almost offends one to be told of the base and undistinguished uses of these latter times. That Kempe's boys should have played skittles up here is bearable. But that the John Moore of 1780 should have used this place of martyrdom as a furrier's drying store (343), that Kempe's widows should

have dried their washing here on rainy days, that these hallowed walls should now be used for any mean-spirited tourist to scribble his meaningless name—these are *not* bearable; they do not accord with the dignity of History.

XI

When you return the key of the attics to the Clerk, you should ask leave, for you have no right, to inspect the Minute Books of the Charities, which are extant from 1837 (315). You will learn much from them of the wise administration of the Biggin by the trusty successors of Kempe's 'trustie frendes.' You will see what pains they have taken to keep this doddering old house upon its legs. For a century and more it has been creaking in every limb. The Clerk has been constantly reporting upon 'settlements in exterior walls,' 'rotting timbers' and 'falling tiles' (xxii). One after another those mullioned windows which visitors admire, but which the Trustees have to repair, and whose draughts the almswomen have to endure, have been restored and some of them renewed; and that, too, in spite of their 'double bonds of leads for defence of greate wyndes and outragious wetheringes.' Following the petitions of rheumaticky old women, the brick floors downstairs have been replaced by wood. And sometimes against the petitions of the same old women, biennial 'cleanings' and triennial 'distemperings' have been decreed. In 1896, for example, when the ceiling of Lizzie Cannon's room was discovered to be 'bowed,' she sent word to the Trustees 'that she would rather not have anything done to it at present' (315. 2).

Amongst the miscellaneous petitions we may notice that of Widow Searle 'for leave to remove from an upper to a lower room in consequence of her inability to get up and down stairs'; and of the community in general 'for a wash-house,' 'for a qualified nurse to live in one of the rooms,' and for 'an increase in the weekly allowance' (315. 3–5). At last came the great day, 1857, when the Trustees resolved 'that in future the whole of the eighteen inmates of the Biggin should be paid one shilling a week instead of sixpence as hitherto' (315. 8).

xxii. As if the wear and tear of time were not enough, a number of evil-disposed persons climbed the roof one winter night of 1856 and stripped off the protecting lead (315. 7).

From that time, and notwithstanding the complications of 'war bonuses' and 'old-age pensions' and 'parish relief,' the allowances have steadily increased. In addition to the allowance there is the monthly and equal sharing out of the box which in 1904 was installed in the cloister to receive the alms of those who came to view the Biggin (315. 9). Before then the visitor as he entered was dismayed to see the inmates of the lower rooms hobbling towards him as fast as their rheumatics would allow, and the inmates of the upper rooms scurrying down the stairs, each rival clamouring in a shrill voice to be his guide. He must needs please one and displease all the rest, or else he must pay his way into every separate room. Now, doing his alms in secret, he can please and pacify them all.

To declaim against the poor for a mercenary spirit would be ridiculous; it is often their only way to live. But one is glad to know that this has departed out of the Biggin. It was the only slur upon that 'honest conversation' that Kempe required of his widows. No doubt the Charity Minutes record the truth in a charitable way. But hardly a case for discipline appears in the four volumes which they fill. Only one woman has been 'ordered to leave the house.' It was as far back as 1877. According to the Minutes, 'Mr. Vincent, the Relieving Officer, visited the house on Boxing Day and found Mrs. Cannon and her daughter Mrs. Pestell and some men with beer on the table in her room, and Mrs. Cannon caught hold of his arm, and asked him to join them. Mr. Vincent immediately left the place' (315. 10). Two months later, on February 5, 1878, Mrs. Cannon is reported to have been 'found helplessly drunk and had been carried home by two men, much bruised and knocked about. She admitted having been at the Early Bird Public House, but denied being "tipsey." She took a glass of ale and being so weak it took a great effect on her, and she fell down in a fit of weakness and knew nothing about anything till the next morning, when she awoke in bed feeling very bad indeed' (315. 11). After these shameful scenes the Trustees grew more vigilant. They decided to stop the allowance of those who misconducted themselves, and they appointed one of the inhabitants to act as porteress and to lock the door of the Biggin House every night not later than ten o'clock, and open it in the morning at 6 (315. 12). As a further insurance of good behaviour, the 'inhabitants' were expected to attend

divine service at St. Mary's on the Sunday, and an obscure place was provided for them in the south chapel just at the back of the screen (xxiii).

Perhaps it is not unfitting that we should take our leave of them here—here in this church, some of whose stones were standing when Gilbert of Sempringham was born. Here is the effigy in proud marble of Sir Edward de Kendale, by whom the Biggin was begun. Here in peace lies the contentious spirit of Robert Snagge, who built the present house. Here is the resting-place of Joseph Kempe. Here are the tombs of all his trusty friends. Kempe's ancient and disabled widows, when they came to die, had no place of honourable interment here. But in their lifetime they were glad to come into the house of Him who is ' the widow's champion and defence,' for ' she that is a widow and desolate hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications both night and day.'

xxiii. John Moore has a lively recollection of certain miscreant boys who used to lean out of the South Gallery and spit down upon the Biggin women, till one day the beadle caught them in the act and led one of the culprits out of the church by the ear in the middle of the sermon (343).

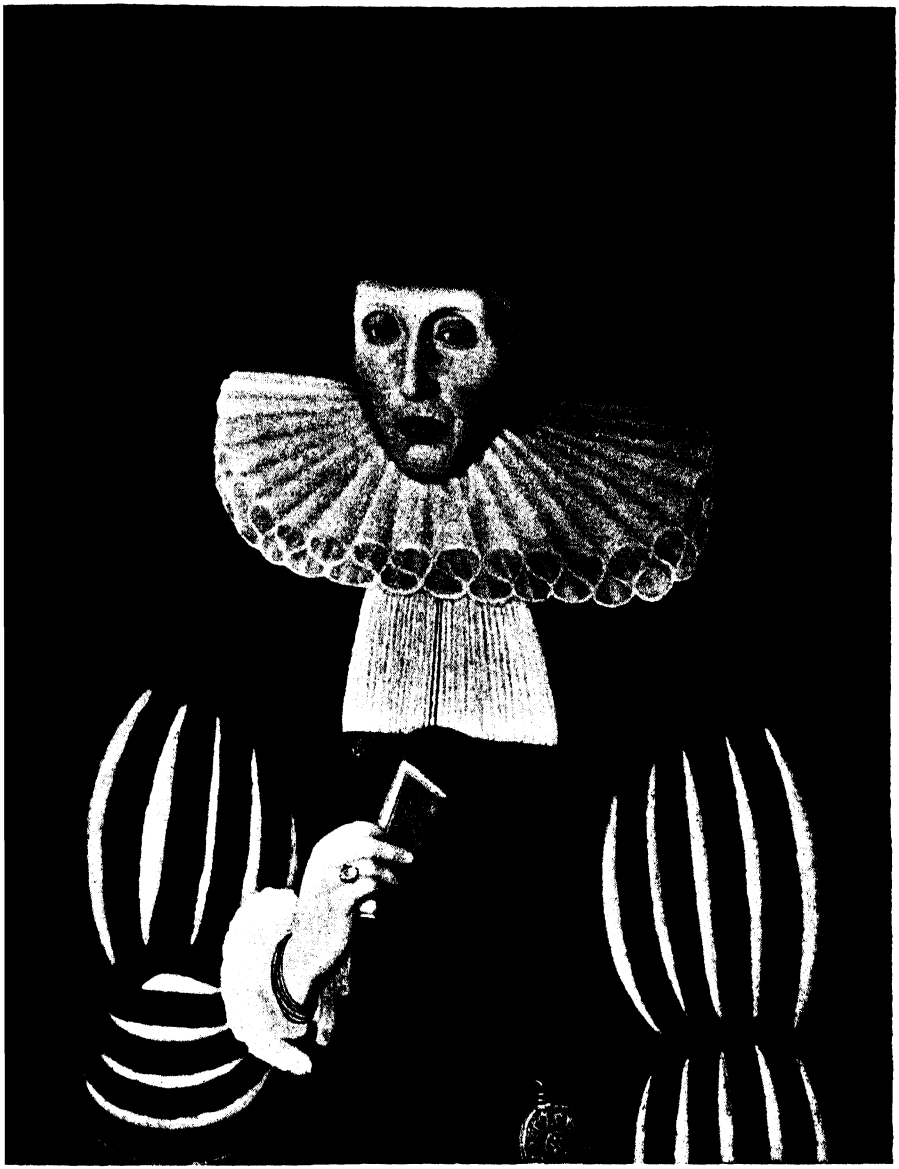
THE CIVIL WAR AND COMMONWEALTH (i)

'I have heard that the King has his crown by divine right, but we the people have a divine right too.'—SIR ROBERT HOWARD, sometime Steward of Hitchin Manor, *Cobbet's Parliamentary History*, v, 46.

I

HITCHIN throughout the Civil War presents the curious spectacle of a Royal Manor inhabited by Roundheads. One ought not to be surprised, perhaps, at the disloyalty of the tenants. They and their fathers before them had known the kings of England too well to put much trust in them. James and Charles, who had idled their time so frequently in the neighbouring town of Royston, they knew particularly well. It was the misrule of these Stuarts that had slowly worn out the loyalty they once had for their Lord the King and provoked a stern and bitter temper in its place. That terrific charge which their own member brought before the Parliament of 1640, 'The judges have overthrown the law and the Bishops the Gospel'—every word of it was true, as they knew painfully well (388. 27). Had not the Petition of Right been set at naught? How many times had they not protested against the Hitchin Trained Band being taken over by strange officers and transported to foreign parts? By what authority had they been charged for coat and conduct money? By what subterfuge were they, in an inland county, required to pay £3,984 6s. 8d. for ship-money? (386. 4). Why, in God's name, should they be dragged into the Bishops' War with the good people of Scotland and the Hitchin constables be roundly ordered, September 1640, to find 'able pioneers, good carts furnished with men and horse, and likewise spades, shovels and pick-axes'? (386. 5). It was no quarrel of theirs. They had their wool-stapling and malting to attend to, and they had already told Lord Salisbury in plain terms that 'the trade of war is discredited amongst the people

i. I wish to acknowledge the goodness of Dr. George Macaulay Trevelyan (the author, amongst other historical classics, of *England under the Stuarts*) for reading this chapter in its first rough state, and for putting his finishing touch upon it.



NN CHESTER RADCLIFFE, MISTRESS OF HITCHIN PRIORY AND NURSE OF THE HITCHIN SICK AND WOUNDED IN THE CIVIL WAR

From the original painting by an unknown artist at Hitchin Priory

of this county' (79. 2. 30). But what tried their patience beyond anything was the insidious way in which their Protestant faith was being undermined. That was something their fathers had died for, and for which they also were ready to die. But if these meddling prelates, these 'bouncing priests,' were allowed to go on in Laud's name, the Reformation was no better than a hollow sham. Almost every year whilst Laud was their Archdeacon there had been foisted upon them some new observance which 'put upon the churches the shape and face of Popery' (386. 5). In their short day they had seen one superstitious use after another creep in: the use of the Cross, the use of the surplice, the idolatrous altar-cloth, the practice of 'ducking' at the altar, and the removal of the altar itself from the nave to the farther end of the chancel, so that it might be railed in and reserved for the priest against the profanation of the common people. They had seen the Gospel-preaching of the Lecturers suppressed and the Bible in danger of being superseded by the Book of Sports. All these things, and more also, had been permitted by the Defender of the Faith, who was a mere puppet, so it was said, in the hands of his popish wife. Their own Bishop, Williams of Lincoln, almost the only one who had ventured to stand up against Laud's innovations (ii), had been ruined with a fine of £10,000 and imprisoned for three years, 1637–40, in the Tower; all for putting in a merciful word for the Puritan party with the King. 'They are many and strong sticklers,' he had said; 'but if your Majesty would give but private orders to your ministers to connive a little at their party, and show them some indulgence, it might perhaps mollify them a little, and make them more pliant, though I do not promise that they will be trusty long to any government.' On another occasion he had said 'that the Puritans were the king's best subjects and he was sure they would carry all at last' (384. 7).

Whilst Williams languished in prison, Laud, 'that little meddling hocus-pocus,' as he called him, seized the opportunity to go on a visitation about his diocese, and it was the 'thorough' and sweeping changes that he imposed that led to the first

ii. See his book, *The Holy Table, Name and Thing, more anciently properly and literally used under the New Testament than that of Altar*, 1637. In practice he was disposed to allow the communion table, though removed, as Laud wished, to the east end of the church, to be brought down to the nave for the actual celebration.

outbreak of violence in these parts (386. 6). In the month of August 1640 a band of soldiers broke into the churches round about Hitchin, and showed by their rough handling what they thought of the new-fangled vestments and Romish altar-cloths. Whilst the Reverend Mr. Battell, curate of King's Walden, was conducting service on the Sunday morning, he and his village congregation were dumbfounded by the sudden entry of twenty-four soldiers, who marched up the nave aisle into the chancel itself and sat down as near the new altar-rails as they could get. Wondering what was going to happen next, the curate went on with the service. The moment his sermon was ended the soldiers leapt to their feet and in the sight of the congregation tore down the rails. They then demanded money from the minister, though his stipend was only £12 a year, and, having fleeced him, invited themselves to the churchwardens' for dinner. In the afternoon they added to their enormities by bringing an excommunicated person into the church, and compelled Mr. Battell to read Evensong in his presence (386. 6).

Three days later they entered Periam Docwra's park at Lilley, commandeered a fat ox, and led it down to Hitchin market in a sort of mock-triumphal procession, with drums beating and trumpets sounding. After a parley with Squire Docwra, who had followed them all the way, 'looking on and not daring to resist,' the soldiers restored the ox to him for sixteen shillings drink money. When that was spent and swallowed, they laid siege to the house of Captain Brockett, their paymaster, and, crying out that he had tricked them out of their wages, threatened to have their money or his blood. It was not the Captain's blood, however, that was to flow, for, charging them single-handed, he ran his sword through the ringleader and put the rest of them utterly to rout (386. 6). To have disciplined soldiers behave in this sacrilegious and mutinous manner was serious enough, but to the Court of Star Chamber it seemed a far more serious thing that no one was brought to book. The justices and jurors of the hundreds of Hitchin and Broadwater were told to make 'strict enquiries for the rioters, their countenancers and abettors,' but they seem to have gone about the work sullenly and slowly. 'They seriously affirm to us on oath,' report the justices of the county, 'that they could not discover the names or dwellings of any of the malefactors.' In order to make some show of diligence, and

to avoid being thought 'countenancers' themselves, they arrested one Edmund Aylee, described as the 'captain of these unruly soldiers,' but he was liberated by his fellow-soldiers, and bragged afterwards that 'he could have five hundred to relieve him in case of need.' The Court of Star Chamber were so incensed at the incompetence or the indifference of the justices that they committed their chairman, Sir John Jennings, to the Fleet prison, where, as no one came to liberate him, he not long afterwards died (386. 7).

II

Two months later the famous Long Parliament met 'to consider all the grievances of the people these many years.' Petitions poured in from one county after another to strengthen the resolution of the members. The freeholders of Hitchin, almost without exception, signed the manifesto from Hertfordshire which Arthur Capel presented to the House, and which Pym, who at one time lived at Wymondley, only two miles distant from Hitchin, rose to support (386. 8). Much that this manifesto demanded was brought to pass by the Commons in that *annus mirabilis*, 1641. Strafford was executed. The Court of Star Chamber and the High Commission Court were abolished and ship-money declared illegal. But the petitioners still looked for that 'perfect reformation of Church and Commonwealth' for which they had prayed; and meantime the King's heart had hardened, and their brethren in Ireland had been foully done to death. On January 25, 1641–42, the men of Hitchin joined in the imposing procession of ten thousand knights, gentlemen, freeholders and other inhabitants of the county of Hertford, who marched to the door of Westminster Hall, and there delivered two further petitions, one for the Lords and one for the Commons. To the Lords they represented 'the manifold feares, troubles and distractions wherewith they are encompassed, arising from the hellish and bloody rebellion in Ireland, from the continuance of the Prelacy and multitudes of erronious and scandalous Ministers in this kingdome, the insolence of the Papists, the great and unparalleled breaches lately made upon the privileges of Parliament [i.e. in the attempted arrest of the Five Members three weeks before], the misunderstanding between His Majesty and the Parliament,

all which having occasioned the total decay of trade and great scarcity of money and thereby the impoverishing and unsettlement of the kingdome, the Petitioners pray that the voting of Popish Lords and Bishops may be removed out of the House of Lords, and the evil counsellors may be taken from about His Majesty.' To the Commons, as men of their own level, they were more outspoken in pointing out 'the sad and almost desperate condition' of the country. They prayed that the Papists might be fully disarmed, and 'the kingdome and especially this county, according to their late petition on that behalf, put into a posture of warre for their better defence.' For their own part, they wished Parliament to know that 'they took upon themselves the humble boldness to declare their readiness and great engagements according to their Protestation to stand to and defend to the utmost perill of their lives and estates both the King's Majestie and the High Court of Parliament against all Popish and other malignant opposers' (79. 2. 28).

With the Protestation stuck defiantly in their hats, the Petitioners of Hitchin returned to their own homes, and there awaited the fateful issues of the next few weeks. Meanwhile they went from house to house gathering 'The Contribucion of the Inhabitantes of Hitchin towards the Releife of theire afflicted and distressed Brethren, the Protestants in Ireland.' The Squire, Edward Radcliffe, heads the list with 40s.; 'the servantes at Mr. Radclyffes' give 3s. 9d.; Wm. Lindall, the vicar, gives 20s.; his two daughters, Lettice and Elizabeth, 5s.; Graveley Wapell, their man, 1s.; John Skynner, Steward of the Manor, 13s. 4d.; the Lucases, the Audleys, the Papworths, the Drapers, the Hursts, the Chambers, all are there down to the very least. The Widow Thornfoote brings her mite of 6d.; the Widow Luckout, 'fower pence' (348).

The total of £7 17s. 4d. is not large, but then trade was 'totally decayed,' and who knew how soon it might not be their own turn to be 'afflicted and distressed'? Already the Queen had left England with the Crown jewels to buy munitions of war and the King had withdrawn from London. By March 3rd he had reached Royston with the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York and many of his nobles, and stayed there for five days. There was still a coming and going of messengers between him and the Commons. At length, to their demand that he should surrender his claim on the Militia, came the

defiant reply, 'No, by God, not for an hour.' It was the last word. The King marched on through Cambridge and Huntingdon to York. On August 22nd, 'the evening of a very stormy and tempestuous day,' the Royal Standard was unfurled at Nottingham. The Civil War had begun (386. 11).

III

It would be superfluous to follow the confused course of the struggle over the whole face of the country, for that belongs to the general history of the time rather than to the simpler purpose before us; and Hertfordshire, though it saw more of the organization and suffered more from the movement of the Parliamentary Armies than any county in the Eastern Association, saw less than most of the actual fighting. From the outset Hitchin was looked upon as a Parliamentary stronghold and a place of strategic importance. Here as elsewhere the time had come for every man to make the great decision, to declare without further dissimulation whether he were on the side of the King or on the side of the people. A hard choice with such brave leaders in either camp. The mere plain citizen was bewildered with rival proclamations, pasted side by side on church doors and gateways of inns, and summoned to serve in opposing armies by rival Lord-Lieutenants (386. 14). At Hitchin, however, there was no hesitating. The townspeople were solid for the Parliament. At heart, no doubt, Edward Radcliffe was Royalist enough. Who could be otherwise with 'Caen, Creçy, Calais' as his motto? Also his own father had been a 'sworn servant' of the King's father. But Edward's wife, whose portrait is prefixed to this chapter, 'was a sweet and excellent Puritan,' and would not let her husband go. She seems to have taken command at the Priory and kept him virtually a prisoner all through these dangerous times. When awkward questions were asked, she answered them by spending his income with royal profusion for the Parliamentary cause. Mixed up with her domestic accounts you begin to find items such as these: 'Paid for a drum, 8s.; Paid for a barrell of gunpowder, 9s.; Paid for mending the windows where the soldiers were, 12s.' (2. 25). It was going to be an expensive matter, all this recruiting and training and fitting out of the soldiers. The parish armour in St. Mary's Church

was hopelessly out of date. There were no pieces of ordinance, only half a dozen muskets, a few rusty pikes and some obsolete bows and arrows. The armourers and gunsmiths of the district were going to be kept busy for the next few years. It was for the non-combatants to come forward with their contributions in horses and money and plate. 'Even women's thimbles to an unheard-of amount' were brought in (386. 13).

Shortly after the outbreak of the war the Hitchin contingent of the Trained Bands reported to the headquarters of the Earl of Essex in St. Albans. A silent and moody sort of man, but earnest as grim death. In his speech to them, at the head of his army, on September 24th, he promised that even the poorest soldier should have justice. 'Neither,' said he, 'will I engage any of you into danger, but I will in my own person run an equal hazard with you and either bring you off with honour or (if God have so decreed) fall with you and willingly become a sacrifice for the preservation of my country' (iii) (386. 20). 'In a way of triumph and with millions of people lining the highways and shouting Hosanna,' the great army, bearing the orange colours of the Parliament and its motto, 'God with us,' upon the Standard, marched down Watling Street, that ancient army road, on its way to the North. It passed almost within cannon shot of Hitchin; some went out to give it a cheer. All men prayed fervently and confidently for its success. All men were saying, 'With such a general and such men we shall make short work with the King and his supporters.'

The news of Edgehill that reached here on October 24th was an unexpected blow. Those runaways who came in first reported 'all for lost, and the King's army to be so terrible that it could not be encountered.' It was not by any means so bad as that; but the army that had set out 'in a way of triumph' was very soon back in St. Albans, 'as if,' says Ludlow, 'they had been beaten' (386. 21). Meanwhile the King's forces were marching practically unopposed on London. Would they come by way of Bedford or through Hitchin? That was the terrifying question on everybody's lips. And how could the raw recruits at Hitchin save them from that fiend incarnate Rupert? Fortunately for the town, the King's army swerved to the right and ravaged the western quarter of the county.

iii. In all his campaigns he carried with him his family escutcheon, his coffin and his shroud, ready for his funeral should fate so order it (386. 19).

THE EARL OF ESSEX, THE GENERAL UNDER WHOM THE HITCHIN SOLDIERS FOUGHT

From an engraving by W. Hollar, *circa* 1646

There were skirmishes at Watford, and a bloody fight in the dark at Brentford, where but for Colonel Hampden's gallantry the battle had been lost (386. 23). In this emergency the Earl of Essex ordered a general rendez-vous of the Home Counties at High Wycombe on December 1st. Trained or not trained, any man who could stand upright and shoulder a pike or a gun was to come there with all speed. They came in thousands—in such thousands that the King abandoned his attempt on London and was glad enough to get away. Thereupon, on December 7th, the 'gentry and commonalty of the counties of Buckingham, Bedford, Hertford and Cambridge' drew up a further Remonstrance and Protestation showing 'the reason why they take up arms and their Resolutions thereupon; tendered by them at their meeting with the Parliament Forces to the view of the world.' 'Not only is our Religion,' they protest, 'in imminent danger to be altered to Popery and all our just privileges overthrown, but our wives ravished, our children murdered, and our estates absolutely ruined; and His Majesty who ought in his duty to God and his Country to be the Father of his people is now made the Protector of a blasphemous and impious crew, and of all their bloody and horrid actions. We therefore, out of a sense of the Kingdom's and our own dangers, have associated ourselves and taken up armes with full resolution to prosecute the enemies of our Religion and Country, and do hereby solemnly covenant that we will willingly and resolutely sacrifice our lives in this religious and just quarrel, and that we will never lay down these armes till this which is called the King's army be dissolved, and till the Principall advisers, actors and fomentors in these our heavie calamities, such as that blasphemous and plundering Prince Rupert, be banished, and those notorious Papists commanding in the army be brought to a due course of justice' (350. *e.* 129. 22).

IV

It is evident that the Puritans were thoroughly roused at last. Nor, in this neighbourhood at least, was their enthusiasm allowed to cool, for every week a call to arms was sounded in the ears of those who came to Hitchin market by champions of the Parliamentary cause. The order of the House of Commons was that fifteen orthodox divines should be appointed as

lecturers 'to preach in the parish church of Hitchin every Tuesday, and the parson or vicar of the said parish is hereby required to permit the said ministers to preach there without molestation or interruption' (346). Amongst these zealots was Henry Denne, curate of Pirton, who had already made himself notorious by exposing the vices of the clergy and the corruption both in doctrine and worship of the Established Church. To further sermons of this kind at Hitchin he added another in commendation of the Baptists, which was more than his fellow-lecturers could stand (380). 'That old enemy of the truth,' as Bunyan afterwards called William Lindall, the vicar of Hitchin, liked it even less, and, although Denne was struck off the list of Orthodox Divines (iv), he determined to resign. To be preached at from his own pulpit and to be powerless 'to molest or interrupt' was more than his proud spirit could endure. Of the other lecturers appointed to St. Mary's, we may notice Dr. Robert Chester, of Stevenage, the brother of the 'sweet and excellent Puritan' at Hitchin Priory, and, if one may trust his epitaph, no less 'sweet and excellent' himself (v); Benjamin King, who removed from Flamstead to Hitchin in 1643 and became vicar in 1644, 'one of a bold spirit,' says Calamy, 'a very Boanerges in the pulpit'; Nathaniel Eeles, of Harpenden, who had studied in Holland under that *helluo librorum*, or gormandizer of books, Gisbert Voet, and who was himself 'an excellent text man and well acquainted with the scriptures'; and, last but not least, save in bodily stature, Herbert Palmer, of Ashwell, who was a member of the West-

iv. This was only the beginning of Henry Denne. He had a picturesque after-career. Professing himself a Baptist in 1643, he was soon lodged in prison for preaching against infant baptism. On his release in 1645 he went about the country declaiming against tithes, 'whereby he draws the people after him.' He also said that a minister ought to work for his living and became a carter on the London and Spalding road. Being again apprehended, he chose the one alternative to prison which the magistrate offered and served as a soldier till 1649. When the Civil War was ended, he proclaimed an uncivil one on his own account against the ignoble army of priests and presbyters, disputing with them here, there and everywhere until his dying day. His epitaph, 1660, reads thus: 'To tell his wisdom, learning, goodness unto men, I need to say no more, but here lies Henry Denne' (384. 3).

v. 'Stay, Traveller, and read: Here lies a glittering beam of gospel light, a shining model of approved virtue, a true son of the Catholic Church, a pillar of doctrine and by his life an ornament to the dignity, joy and pride of our age. Here to the earth he has left his remains, to the world his fame and to the stars his soul. Traveller, go thou and do likewise.'

minster Assembly of Divines and the compiler of the Shorter Catechism issued under their name (384 & 383). As this 'little crooked man' came into the pulpit one Sunday, a woman of the congregation exclaimed, 'What should this child say to us?' But when he proceeded to deliver one of his 'trumpet-tongued addresses' she lifted up her hands to heaven with admiration and joy, blessing God for what she had heard. 'He was a man,' as one of his biographers relates, 'of natural meekness, of winning courtesy, but of great courage and resolution.' Before the Civil War, 'when he was to preach at the Bishop of Lincoln's visitation at Hitchin, 1638, he had spoken freely and fully against the corruptions then in practice. When the reading of the Book of Sports, bowing to the altar, reading the service book there etc. were urged, he was most resolute against them, resolving to lose all than to comply.' In view of his opposition to the Laudian innovations, it was surprising that he should have been presented to Ashwell by Laud himself. The Archbishop actually pleaded this in his defence as one of his good deeds. It was a paradox like one of those 'Christian Paradoxes' which used to be attributed to Lord Bacon, but which are now rightly ascribed to the pen of Herbert Palmer. *The Character of a Christian in Paradoxes and Seeming Contradictions*—in that work is the character of Palmer himself. 'A Christian,' he writes, 'is one who believes things which his reason cannot comprehend, who hopes for that which neither he nor any man alive ever saw, who labours for that he knows he can never attain. Yet in the issue his belief appears not to have been false. Hope makes him not ashamed. Labour is not in vain' (384. 6; 386. 177).

Whilst the pulpit of St. Mary's rang with the appeals of these Orthodox Divines 'to go forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty,' whilst Palmer preached his famous sermon before the House of Commons on *The Necessity and Encouragements of Utmost Venturing for the Churche's Help*, the good people of Hitchin were not idle. The parish rang with the shouts of them that trained, the anvil blows of such as forged them arms. This town of shopkeepers, whose well-to-do citizens had always sent their ne'er-do-wells as substitutes into the Militia,

> '. . . to make a show of arms,
> Then hasten to be drunk, the business of the day,'

was now becoming a recruiting centre for godly men, a training ground of the Eastern Counties Association (vi). The parish accounts of 1643, which have found their way, oddly enough, into the Priory, are full of the trappings of war. There are payments for 'corselets and head-pieces and muskets and culverins.' Items appear 'for scouringe the harnesse of the militia,' for 'Candells when ye soldiers did watch,' for 'layeinge of faggots and pitch on Beacon Hill' (2. 27–36). Arrangements are made with the farmers for the hire, out of ploughing and harvesting seasons, of their horses, geldings and nags. And taxes are laid upon all. Quite early in the struggle it was evident that the voluntary contributions of those who were hot for Parliament would not suffice. And besides, why should the 'Neuters and Byestanders' be excused from doing their bit? It was going to be a long war; and silver and gold are the very sinews of war. In the spring of 1643, accordingly, it was decided to levy £900 a week on the whole county 'for public service,' Hitchin, as one of the five divisions, paying its quota of £180 (386. 36). In addition, the county was required to support its Trained Bands (28s. a month for every serving man), and make further emergency payments in times of stress, e.g. on March 31st of that year, when Parliament, taking into consideration 'the great danger to the county of Hertford upon the credible information that the forces from Oxford are now upon their march toward the said county to plunder and pillage the same,' made an ordinance for raising the sum of £450 'for paying of forces, fortifying towns and buying arms and ammunition for the necessary defence and safety of the said county' (386. 34).

V

These weekly levies and extraordinary payments, agreed to in the beginning 'out of their good affections,' became, as the

vi. To keep the war out of their own districts and raise an army for the Parliament, the counties of Hertford, Essex, Cambridge, Norfolk and Suffolk formed an association under this style by ordinance dated December 20, 1642. Its first commander was Lord Grey of Wark, and he was succeeded in turn by the Earl of Manchester and Oliver Cromwell. 'Other counties formed similar associations,' writes Carlyle, 'but the Eastern Association is alone worth naming. All the other associations, no man of emphasis being in the midst of them, fell in a few months to pieces; only this of Cromwell's subsisted, enlarged itself, grew famous; and, indeed, kept its own borders clear of invasion during the whole course of the war' (382. 1. 103).

war dragged on, an intolerable burden. In the Priory muniment room, for example, there is a bailiff's account for 1643 in respect of a piece of land which was let at a rent of £60. After the 'Taxes layd upon Mr. Radcliffe, his land,' had been deducted, there was left for the landlord exactly £5 11s. 4d. The rest was swallowed up in such items as these: 'Payd to Humphry Swallow for Dragoons, 16s. 8d.; payd to Henry Pym for 2 moneths contriburon, 30s.; payd to Thomas Feild for the pay of the Commanders belonging to our soldiers, 6s. 8d.; payd to Thomas Nash for a moneth's pay for the soldiers, 16s. 8d.; payd to Robert Cuckoe for three moneth's pay for the garrison at Newport [Pagnell], 11s.; payd to the Constables for a moneth's pay for the soldiers, recruiting of horses, and other charges, 16s. 9d.; payd to John Clisby 2 moneth's contriburon for the Earle of Manchester, 30s. (vii); payd to the constables part of a moneth's pay for the clothing of prest souldiers and for buyeinge of armes, 15s.' (2. 37). Ann Radcliffe saw that her husband's 'contriburons' were paid without delay and without demur; but with most people it was a matter not so much of contribution as compulsion (viii). As early as May 1643 Parliament had to send down Sir Thomas Dacres and Mr. John Heydon to inquire why the collectors were not collecting their money. In September Cromwell is complaining: 'I cannot get the Norfolk part, nor the Hertfordshire.' 'You have had my money,' he adds; 'I hope in God I desire to venture my skin. So do mine [i.e. my people]: lay weight upon their patience but break it not' (386. 39). In his history of the Long Parliament, May speaks of the counties in the Eastern Asso-

vii. The Earl took over the command of the Association on August 10, 1643.

viii. Since this chapter was written I have acquired a number of tax receipts relating to the family of Hale, of King's Walden and Hitchin. It may be of interest to note some amongst them of this period: '1644, 26th April. For the weekly assessment for two months for the army under the Earl of Essex upon an ordinance of parliament, 25s.; 1645, 3rd March. For twelve months paye for Nuport-panell that was due Feb. 16th, 1644; 1645, 10th March. For the maintenance of the garresons in the Eastern Associations, 20s. 2d.; 1645, June 30th. For Mrs. Phip's rent, £15, less taken by Soldiers £8 6s. 2d. = £6 13s. 10d.; 1645, 26th Oct. For the use of my Lord Generall's Armie, 15s.; 1645, 6th Dec. For reducing of Newarke; 1648, 25th March, Three months tax for Thomas Fairfax, his army, £3 3s. 0d.; 1652, 23rd June, Three months assessment for the army in England, Ireland and Scotland, £6 6s. 0d.; 1656, 20th Nov. Three months assessment for the army by land and sea, £4 5s. 0d.'

ciation as being kept from the beginning 'without any great combustion,' and goes on to say that 'this great happiness of peace and quiet they enjoyed may be supposed to flow from the unanimity of their affections.' In that he was mistaken. There were too many, alas! who refused to venture either their substance or their skin—faint-hearts who turned aside from Herbert Palmer's call 'to strengthen your hands and hearts in this sacred employment,' and signed petitions for peace. Whilst Cromwell was defending Cambridge against Lord Capel's attack in January 1643, a small company of folk from Hitchin and 'other inhabitants within the county of Hertford' were endeavouring to dodge the undisciplined bodies of soldiers then plundering in all parts and get to the House of Lords. 'We are very sensible,' they informed their Lordships, 'of the great destructions and distempers of the times and of the great effusion of blood lately made with great cruelty and immanity [i.e. barbarity] amongst the people of one and the same nation.' Whilst praying for a cessation of hostilities, they ask that measures may be adopted instantly whereby they may better possess themselves and their estates in peace with protection 'from the violence and fury of the unruly and dissolute multitudes who endeavour to raise themselves by the ruin of your petitioners' (386. 30).

If the Lords cared to waste time over petitions like this, that was their own affair. It concerned nobody else, for they no longer possessed any dominion or power or glory. Besides, the Commons were already at work upon this very problem. The only way to get rid of these 'unruly and dissolute' soldiers was to raise a citizen army in their stead. They must finish with these 'decayed serving-men and tapsters,' these mercenary bravos who were hired to cut the throats of fellow-Christians for wages; Cromwell was right, they must train up 'honest, sober Christians' to do the work of the Lord. It all came back to a question of time and money. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, your godly and orthodox divines could raise 'an army—many armies—of prayers all the kingdom over,' as Herbert Palmer had said. But mere godliness will not turn a cheesemonger into a soldier, however hard he may pray. Not for a long while, moreover, had ordinary people been used to handling arms. 'Men of base condition,' as Chauncy, our county historian, remarked, 'had not been allowed to perform

military services, for 'twas thought that noble men and gentlemen should be exercised in the feats of Arms rather than rustics and ignoble persons who were bred up to Mechanick Trades.' It was not to be supposed that the mere rabble could have the least pretence to valour. 'You will not get them to fight,' prophesied the poet Donne, 'save when they are backed by drink, or anger, or hissed on with beholders.' That prophecy was going to be belied. Training will work wonders with the worst of men, and those who had the training in hand were men of the very best. On the Committee which formed the Council of War for Hertfordshire sat such men as Robert Cecil of Hatfield, Garrard of Lamer Park, Lytton of Knebworth, Harrison of Ball's Park (ix), and Wittewronge of Rothamstead. Representing Hitchin, there sat Robert Papworth, gentleman, and Thomas Sadleir, of Temple Dinsley, who, as the grandson of the famous military engineer, Sir Richard Lee, was believed to have inherited some portion of his skill (x). The Committee met occasionally in the Sun Inn at Hitchin, but more often at Knebworth. They were kept in touch with Parliament by flying visits from Hampden and Pym, and with the Committee of the Eastern Association, sitting at Cambridge, by the reports of their own representative, Sir John Read, Lord of the Manor of Minsden (xi) (386. 28).

VI

It was not long before those in training at Hitchin had a chance to show their mettle. Already in April 1643 a body of

ix. He deserted to the King's side quite early in the war. Though a man at one time of enormous wealth—he had advanced £150,000 in 1641 to get the Scottish Army out of the country—he was able to carry very little with him on his escape to Oxford. He lodged there in a poor baker's house, and suffered all the griefs and pangs of poverty. When his daughter Anne married Richard Fanshawe in 1644, their joint fortune amounted to no more than £20. In later years husband and wife successively held the Lordship of Hitchin Manor, from 1660–69. See chapter on 'The Manor,' *supra*, pp. 60–1.

x. In 1546 Henry VIII had made a grant of lands at Hitchin to this same Sir Richard Lee (L. & P. Hen. VIII, xxi, part i, 648. 46).

xi. He is described by a contemporary writer as 'a right godly man, very active at Committee, and as a justice of the peace in suppressing ale-houses.' In 1646 he was assessed to contribute to war expenses in the sum of £600; but on his alleging poverty the amount was remitted. For services rendered he was created a baronet by Oliver Cromwell, the first hereditary dignity which the Protector conferred (399).

Royalist troops under Rupert had sallied out from Oxford in their direction and had captured Wendover. 'They have plundered,' so ran the report, 'all the towns thereabout of all their goods and household stuff, driven away all their horses, beasts, and sheep; spoiled and turned the inside of many fair houses; cut even the farmer's harness and things belonging to the plough; and have sworn horrid oaths that we shall have no harvest this year' (386. 34).

As it chanced, however, Rupert was besieging Bristol when harvest came; and what with that and the siege of Gloucester which followed he was kept fully occupied in the west till the first battle of Newbury was fought (September 20th). In October, when he was free to carry out his threat, he had the luck to find no Roundheads in his way. The Earl of Essex was at Windsor, the Earl of Manchester at Boston. As for the Trained Bands of Herts and Beds, he could snap his fingers at them; such 'hypocrites and incapables' were not likely to stand a second charge. 'Plundering wherever they came,' Rupert's Dragoons galloped into Dunstable just as the townspeople were holding their Michaelmas fair; they 'made great spoil,' it was said, of corn and horses and cattle. By Rupert's order Sir Lewis Dives then attacked Ampthill, where the Beds County Committee were sitting, and before these worthies understood what was happening he had captured them one and all. In the meantime Rupert had taken Bedford almost without a blow. Whether from treachery or cowardice does not appear, but not a man of the Trained Bands would stir, 'whereupon Sir John Norris was constrained to quit the town and himself and others were taken prisoners.' Then, according to the Parliament Scout of October 20th, a curious incident occurred. Sir John Norris managed to escape, and, making his way towards Hitchin, sent for a troop of horse to come to his assistance. These and other troops went out to meet Sir John, and at last 'they brought their Colonel shouting for joy towards Hitchin'; whereupon some person, not knowing who they were, came post-haste into the town crying out that the enemy were coming, 'which put them all in alarm as far as Hertford' (386. 41).

As soon as the Hitchin soldiers had recovered from their fright—and some of them had fled to Broadwater, a distance of seven miles—they dispatched messengers to the Earl of Essex to apprise him of Rupert's doings and the danger in which they

stood. The Earl thereupon returned to St. Albans in haste, sent on 'three regiments of Londoners,' and ordered all the Trained Bands of the county to meet him at Hitchin on the Saturday. There was no time to lose. Another emergency message was sent to the deputy-lieutenant, 'that Hitchin is assailed by the enemy and has been fighting with them most of the afternoon; we desire an alarm may be given to the associated counties with all speed.' The Home-County reinforcements were already on the way. According to *The True Informer*, *The Perfect Diurnall* and other news-sheets, 'the whole county with wonderous great alacrity was in a sudden raised to defend themselves against the King's forces,' and the sudden muster at Hitchin on that Saturday of 'between three and four thousand Hertfordshire Trained-Band Volunteers,' was one of the largest purely county musters during the war. With their aid the Earl was able to free the county of Hertford from the King's forces, and 'beat them back from Hitchin' (386. 41). By October 26th the Committee sitting at Hitchin had forgotten their 'alarms and excursions,' and regained their confidence: 'Colonel Norwich' (i.e. Norris), so they write to Sir Thomas Barrington, a deputy-lieutenant for Essex, 'is this evening drawn out of Hitchin with a resolution, as he informs us, for Bedford and the places adjacent so that he may interrupt them in their plundering. We are now casting our county into a complete body, and hope within a few days to finish that work and then through God's blessing we doubt not, by the assistance of those London regiments come down to our succour, to remove them farther from the skirts of our association, promising to ourselves that we shall not want your concurrence.' *They* had the big battalions now, and God was on their side. It took but a little while to drive the enemy out of Bedford and Newport Pagnell, the latter garrison town being won 'without the least bloodshed.' Then, pushing on, they stormed Stony Stratford, where 'they slew thirty of them,' until 'the Cavaliers ranne away in a panic feare towards Oxford' (386. 41). The losses of the Trained Bands are not reported. How many Hitchin men, for example, lie in the fields about the town will never now be known, though the plough still turns up their bones and their bullets at odd times, e.g. in 1820, when several skeletons, swords and carbines of the period were laid bare on Wilbury Hills, together with cannon balls of the heavier type known as Demi-canon, 24½ lbs., and French cannon, 46¼ lbs. The parish registers

speak of two soldiers only as being buried at St. Mary's, and as the word 'killed' is not used they may have died ingloriously of mere civilian diseases: 'Buried Matthew Waldin a shoulder Aprentice (xii) of London: Buried a shoulder, his name was Christopher Fowles' (344. 1 & 2).

VII

To see Rupert run was some little consolation in a year that otherwise had gone hard with the Parliamentary cause. The surrender of Bristol (July 26th), 'the gateway of the west,' had fallen upon their leaders 'like a sentence of death.' Waller's army had been cut to pieces at Roundway Down (July 15th). Hampden, who had been a host in himself, no longer came to sit on their County Committee; he had taken his death wound on Chalgrove Field (June 17th). Nor would they see the patriot Pym again. Himself a dying man, he lingered only to put the last flicker of his life into their dying cause with the Solemn League and Covenant, which was signed on September 25th. By December 3rd he was dead.

But there was another reason—one nearer home—why the year 1644 found the good people of Hitchin in low spirits. It was one thing to call in the Earl of Essex's army; it was quite another thing, they found, to call it out. They looked like being saddled with it for the winter. Moreover, the Earl had no money to pay his men, and, much as he disliked it (xiii), was obliged to let them quarter themselves as best they could upon the civilian population. It was hard, indeed, on families who after a poor harvest had stored away just enough for their own

xii. Apprentices had been encouraged to enlist by a Parliamentary order which secured them against forfeiting their indentures thereby. 'They shall be secured against their masters from all losse and inconveniences by forfeiture of bonds, covenants or otherwise, and after their public service ended, the Masters of such apprentices shall be commanded and required to recieve them againe into their service, without imposing upon them any punishment, losse, or prejudice for their absence in the defence of the Commonwealth.' See also 'A declaration,' August 1642, 'of the valiant Resolution of the Famous Prentices of London, who are willing to venture their lives and fortunes under His Excellencie the Earle of Essex' (350. *e.* 109. 5).

xiii. 'My desire is,' wrote Essex in December 1643, 'that if there be no pay like to come to me by the end of the week, I may know it; I not being able to stay amongst them to hear the crying necessity of the hungry soldiers' (389. 23).

food to see that little swallowed up by rapacious and hungry soldiers who 'lick up all provisions roundabout them as an ox licketh up the grass of the field.' 'My house,' complains a gentlewoman, quoted by Firth, 'is and hath been full of soldiers this fortnight, such uncivil drinkers and thirsty souls that a barrel of good beer trembles at the sight of them, and the whole house is nothing but a rendez-vous of tobacco and spitting' (389. 297).

As the Earl protested that he was quite helpless in the matter, the inhabitants on the 26th day of February wrote out a remonstrance and petition and sent it to Westminster by the hands of their representatives Sadleir and Papworth, and those of their fellow-members of the County Committee and 'divers freeholders of Hertfordshire.' The petitioners open by reminding the House that they had 'ever since the very beginning of these unhappy distractions wholly given ourselves over in the hazard of what is most dear to us against all opposition for the defence of Parliament, which we are still ready to continue to our utmost with all cheerfulness. But now, having groaned these seventeen weeks under the intolerable burden of Free Quarters of many Horse and Foot, under the command of his Excellency, the Lord General the Earl of Essex, the vastness of which charge we forbear to particularise to you, and hoping by humbly representing it to his Excellency to have found relief from this our so heavy a pressure, whereby we have not of a long while so much as enjoyed the freedom of our own house, but have been in many places subjected to many grievous insolencies besides the consumption of all our provisions laid up for our families which hitherto with all patience we have undergone with assured hopes of repayment . . . we your petitioners submitting our deplorable condition to your wise and provident consideration do beseech that your petitioners may not be destroyed by their friends, but that the army may be speedily recruited and removed and such rates and taxes that are or shall be laid on the county may be suspended until the damages by free quarters be repaid, since we never feared nor spared our lives and fortunes freely for the defence of the Parliament and Commonwealth against all enemies whatsoever' (386. 46).

Urged by petitioners and Parliament alike, the Earl of Essex's army at length marched out of the county on that ill-fated expedition to the west which was to end in its surrender at Lost-

withiel (386. 48). Much to the disgust of the County Committee the Hertfordshire Regiment was handed over to Sir William Waller, whose orders were to keep watch and ward over the King's army at Oxford. On May 25th the Committee petitioned for its return, pointing out that they had to pay for their regiment and were consequently entitled to its protection. Ten days later they petitioned again still more urgently, for in the interval the King, slipping through Waller's lines, had marched with an army of over 10,000 across Buckinghamshire into Bedfordshire and was heading in their direction (386. 48). If he had but known, there was not a single troop of regulars between him and Hertfordshire, or indeed between him and London. Waller, though said to be 'toiling heavily after the king's army,' was not likely to overtake it. Cromwell and Manchester had gone to do battle with Rupert in the north. And this time there was no Earl of Essex to call in. One after another the beacon fires of Wendover, Ivinghoe, Totternhoe and Lilley Hoo flashed news of the King's approach. Messengers brought word that Hockliffe and Leighton Buzzard had been sacked. 'On Lord's Day' (June 24, 1644), says the *Perfect Diurnall*, 'another party entered the town of Dunstable when the people were at service and, not contenting themselves with plunder, made a great disturbance, cutting and slashing the people in the church, and shooting a case of pistols at the minister in the pulpit but missed him, and afterwards abused him very humanely [*sic*]. The like outrage they committed at divers townes and villages thereabout' (386. 49).

Confronted with a similar fate, the town of Hitchin seems to have risen as one man. 'Every citizen not already in arms,' says Kingston, 'shouldered such weapons as he could lay his hand upon, and thus, some with arms and some without, a rude, undisciplined force of people rather than soldiers came out to defend their homes rather than Parliament. What they were going to do against a force which was not a mere marauding party but an army of many thousand horse and foot soldiers—perhaps the most powerful army the King had under his immediate command at any time during the war—they did not wait to calculate.' Those who calculate are lost, and besides they were always being assured by their Orthodox Divines that nothing was impossible for God, or for man to do in God's strength, if only they would be up and doing. So they 'looked to themselves'

and, warning the Committee at Cambridge of what was likely to happen, advised them also 'to look to themselves' (386. 49). As a result of the messages brought to London by dispatch-riders from the Committee sitting at Hitchin, the Earl of Northumberland 'came from the Committee of both Kingdoms to acquaint the House that the King is gone into the Associated counties of Hertford, etc., with his army.' Whereupon Major-General Browne (384. 1), who had distinguished himself in an engagement at Cheriton three months before, was given an emergency command over such troops as he could muster to defend the country between London and the invading army. For this purpose the Hertfordshire regiments were recalled to a rendez-vous at Hertford (June 23rd), and three regiments from the Trained Bands of the city were ordered to join them there (386. 51). The White and Red auxiliaries of the City Bands answered to their call, and brought six pieces of ordnance with them. But 'the Blue Regiment,' reports the General on the 24th, 'has not yet come to us, having refused to march without a month's advance. The whole three regiments if together will not amount to above 500. The enemy as I am credibly informed number 10,000, and as many Horse as Foot' (386. 51).

VIII

Meantime the yeomen and tradesmen and labouring men of Hitchin had got to close quarters with the King's forces, but did not find it quite so feasible after all to sweep their enemies off the face of the earth. 'It is reported,' says General Browne in a later dispatch, 'that of 3,000 countrymen who were gathered together at Hitchin, 300 were not armed, and upon an alarm most ran away. Nor can I hear of any considerable force to join with us hereabouts, and indeed I cannot imagine what we shall do to secure ourselves, having no horse. If the design be thought considerable I desire more strength may be speedily sent to us. Your pleasures I shall humbly await, and your orders obey though to our utter ruin' (386. 51).

It is possible that the uprising of the three thousand at Hitchin, though not accompanied with great gallantry, may have made the Royalists pause, and even alter their plans. Something, at any rate, moved the King, instead of advancing by way of

Hitchin and Bedford to Cambridge, to turn back upon his traces. On June 26th the scouts of the Committee at Hitchin came in with the news that the King's forces were set down before Aylesbury, and that 'they were playing their great guns against it' (386. 51). As soon as General Browne heard of this he resolved at all hazard to join up with Waller's forces, which had just suffered a severe reverse at Cropredy Bridge (June 22nd). Together they might fall upon the Royalists with a better chance of success. 'The Blue Regiment being now come in,' he says in his dispatch, 'I am beating my drums and intend to march this night to St. Albans, the direct way to Aylesbury' (386. 51). Unhappily the Hertfordshires would not march. Oblivious of the big guns thundering away at the gates of Aylesbury, they desired to know how they were going to be paid. They begged the General to remember that their Trained Bands were not bound to go a step beyond the limits of their county. The three thousand irregulars at Hitchin felt they had accomplished their purpose. The King had retreated and their homes were saved. As for their neighbours in Bedfordshire, they did not love them well enough to fight for them; they must fend for themselves. 'Yesterday,' reports General Browne on the 28th, 'I was enforced to ride to Hitchin and attend the Herts Committee there for the better expedition of their march, but to small purpose' (386. 52). As he came back to St. Albans that evening the General heard that Waller 'intended next day to fall upon the king's forces.' With that his mind was made up. He would not 'spin out any further time with these Committees in tedious and delaying disputes.' Early next morning he issued warrants in express terms 'requiring the several forces of Herts and Essex to march this morning and meet me at Dunstable to-night that we may come to Waller's timely assistance if possible' (386. 52).

'The commanders of these forces,' he says in a dispatch to headquarters the same day, 'are very young soldiers and I am afraid I shall labour under a great deal more trouble.' In this he was not mistaken. Being first of all entreated, in consideration of their late danger from the King's forces, to send what strength they could, and being reminded when entreaties failed that the Army Orders prescribed the penalty of death to those who failed to keep a rendez-vous, the Committee at Hitchin marched their unwilling soldiers to Dunstable. It might have

been wiser after all to have left them at home. Neither the 'young commanders' nor the General could do anything with such a rabble. Sir William Waller, with whom a junction was effected at Towcester, describes their conduct in the strongest terms: 'The meeting with Major-General Browne, which I thought would have proved an addition of strength to me, has very much weakened me, for my London regiment immediately looked upon his force as sent to relieve them, and, without waiting for further orders, are most departed. Yesterday 400 out of one regiment quitted their colours. Browne's men, being mostly Trained-Bands men of Essex and Herts, are so mutinous and uncommandable that there is no hope of their stay; they likewise are upon the march home again. Yesterday they were like to have killed their Major-General, and they have hurt him in the face; such men are only fit for the gallows here and a hell hereafter' (386. 53).

Thinking it might encourage or shame these mutineers into soldierly behaviour, Parliament on July 5th sent down 'the good news from York,' to wit the great victory of Marston Moor, and were careful to mention the glorious part played in that battle by the hundreds of Hertfordshire men serving as Cromwell's Ironsides. But it was all to no purpose. 'They had,' says Waller, 'no battle cry but "Home, Home"' (386. 54). It was not so much that they had lost hope in the cause, or that their courage was oozing out of their boots. We have it on the authority of Captain Titus, of Bushey, a very gallant gentleman, that Hertfordshire soldiers were 'pretty well vers'd in the several sounds of bullets' (386. 56). But as Hertfordshire men they felt that they were being asked to shoulder more than their share of the burden, and as men who sprang, as most of them did, from the trading class, they were disgruntled at selling their valuable lives without money and without price. If the rich burghers of London wanted them to save their skins, they should make it worth their while, and pay, not in Guildhall promises, but in cash. As if this were not enough, General Browne and Sir William Waller were also being pestered by 'the grand inquest of the County of Hertford' for the return of the 'New Militia,' 'the ordinance of which was procured without our knowledge or consent. Most detrimental of all is the drawing out of the county of all our forces, not only through the insupportable charge of maintaining them abroad, but in regard that

the harvest is at hand and the labourers few to gather it. Some part of our soldiers must be for a while recalled to assist them, or your petitioners will be utterly disabled from further contributions' (xiv) (386. 54). In the end, and after one of the ringleaders had been court-martialled and condemned to die, most of the Hitchin auxiliaries were returned without thanks and without pay to their wives and their shops and their crops. A small contingent was dispatched to the siege of a Royalist stronghold known as Greenland House on the road to Oxford. The rest, numbering some five hundred under the command of Sir John Garrard, were told off to do garrison duty at Newport Pagnell, a narrow shut-in sort of place where there was scarcely room to lie down and where provisions were hardly to be had for money (386. 56). On the word of the governor himself, Sir Samuel Luke (xv), 'few of 'em have a Penny in their purse to buy even sour bread to put in their mouths; the want of pay,' he goes on to say, 'is such that it would pity a Christian's heart to hear their moanes and complaints.' As for their billets, 'they had to lie 2 or 3 in a bedd.' 'The wants of the soldiery,' he adds, 'are such that they are not fitting to be put on paper, only I shall beg your Excellency's pardon if I acquaint you with one particular. There were two in my company that had but one payre of Britches between them, so that when one was up the other must upon necessity lie in his bedd.' From the same source we learn that the soldiers, tired of 'moaning and complaining,' were demanding 'ten weeks' pay at least,' and with characteristic bluntness were stipulating 'that they may not be put off this time with ye cocking of ye pistoles or stearne threatening as formerly' (356). It was into this Slough of Despond at Newport Pagnell, and at this very time, that there was brought one who as a mere stripling of sixteen had been pressed into the service, and who, being asked his name

xiv. The difficulty of getting men for the harvest is indicated by the fact that the Parliamentary army offered 2s. 6d. a day to a wagoner, which was just double what the farmers were accustomed to pay.

xv. In appearance an insignificant little man, but one of great heart none the less, and a gallant and most efficient commander. His reputation has suffered from the supposition that he was the original of Butler's *Hudibras*. It is asserted in the Life of Butler prefixed to that work that he was for some time in Luke's service, and that he composed *Hudibras* during that period. If that be so, he did his master a disservice. Luke's original letter-book (Stowe MSS., 190), which still waits for a competent editor, portrays a very different and far more pleasing man.

that it might be entered on the muster-roll, gave it as John Bunyan (xvi).

IX

As it was at Newport, so was it everywhere, a time of dearth and discontent. It seemed as though the general stock of treasure and enterprise had been used up; and yet more was expected from those who had less to give. The weekly assessment of the Hitchin district was already increased from £90 to £135, and a separate levy was now made for the keep of the Scottish allies (xvii). Where the money went to no one seemed to know, but one thing was certain, that too little was coming back to them in the way of supplies. The deficiency was partly explained by the arrest in February 1644–45 of the local collector, Captain James Pinckney, who was found to have appropriated over £2,000 to his own use. Thereafter the already overburdened overseers and petty constables of the parish were required to do the collecting for the paltry commission of 3d. in the pound (388. 377).

Whatever the reasons might be, there was a shortage of everything; such a shortage that even the surplices in the parish churches were commandeered and made up into bandages for

xvi. According to Mr. E. G. Atkinson, of the Public Record Office, who in 1896 discovered this muster-roll of the Newport Pagnell garrison, Bunyan was entered on November 30, 1644, as a private, or, as it was then termed, a 'centinel,' in the company commanded by Colonel Richard Cockayne. On March 22, 1645, he appears in the list of Major Boulton's company; and he remained on the strength of the garrison until 1647 (390). It was at Newport Pagnell that there occurred that providential preservation from death which, according to his anonymous biographer, was a frequent subject of thankful reference by him in later years. 'When I was a soldier,' he says, 'I was with others drawn out to go to such a place and besiege it.' This refers most probably to the siege of Greenland House mentioned above, and certainly not Leicester, as Macaulay suggested. 'But when,' he continues, 'I was just ready to go, one of the company desired to go in my room; to which when I consented he took my place, and coming to the siege, as he stood sentinel he was shot in the head with a musket bullet and died.'

xvii. Or as they softly phrased it, 'so that our brethren in Scotland may recieve greater encouragement to march southward.' One might cite many cases to show the unpopularity of the Scottish levy in these parts. Here is one from the Herts Quarter Session Rolls: 'William Hunt deposes that on the last day of humiliation he asked Robert Humberston, as he was making faggots, why he wrought upon that day, whereupon Humberston replied: "What! do you think I will obey these rogues' days?" and said further, "What did they pray for? The money that went to the rogues the Scotts!"' (72. 1. 87)

maimed soldiers, or in some instances into pocket-handkerchiefs for the troops (389. 280). To have the privilege of blowing their noses upon these abominable vestments was said to have given great satisfaction to many snuffling Independents of the baser sort. Above all, there was a shortage of ready money. Even the County Committee was quite unable to meet its obligations. When the governor of Newport Pagnell complained for the tenth time that it was behind with the £500 a month for the keep of its 'one hundred and fifty armed and able men,' the Treasurer replied with the usual exasperation of those in straits: 'How unfit it is that this small county, which has so far exceeded others of thrice its magnitude in payments, should be compelled or called upon for more moneys . . . our Treasury is wholly exhausted and where to borrow more we know not' (381).

Nor was the lot of the private citizen any better. Thomas Sadleir, writing to the governor on November 13, 1644, points out that, by reason of 'these great and manyfold taxations,' he is no longer able to maintain his son. This from the owner of Temple Dinsley, with its fair mansion and its six hundred acres of land! He begs Sir Samuel Luke to take him into the garrison as one of his officers. He can vouch him to be of 'civil, sober and honest demeanour,' as the governor had always required, and more than that, he was of proved courage, 'having been in many fights and namely in the great battle of York' (356).

Yet another illustration of the general scarcity is to be seen in a letter which was written about this time from Hitchin by Henry Ireton, who was Quartermaster-General to the Earl of Manchester: 'Having at several *rendez-vous* taken special notice of the condition of the horse, I find, my Lord, that it is very miserable. Of divers troops the officers soberly and calmly profess that having lent their own and borrowed all they could find, they had at present many horses marching back for want of money to shoe them' (354).

There were plenty of footmen marching back, too, for the same reason. There *was* money, but the Association would not part with it for service outside its borders. In this they were supported by the Earl himself. 'My Army,' he argues in his defence, 'was raised by the Association and was for the guard of the Association' (388. 173). At the second battle of Newbury (October 27th), when the soldiers demanded arrears of pay from Mr. Gossell, the Treasurer, he said he had none

for them till they should come back into the Association, and ' when we can get thither you shall all have new coats and shoes besides money enough, but not a penny till then ' (388. 174). It was after Newbury that Ireton and Waller sided with Cromwell in his split with Manchester. They had seen him deliberately waste a God-given chance of annihilating the King's forces and of ending the Civil War. Whilst they urged on the pursuit the Earl ' spoke much for peace.' ' If we beat the King ninety-nine times,' he had been heard to say, ' yet he is King still and so will his posterity be after him ' (388. 174). As Cromwell observed : ' If this principle be true it condemns all our former fighting as foolish, and is an argument against fighting for the future and a ground for making peace how dishonourable soever.'

It was not only at headquarters there was this division in the camp. It may be traced also amongst the garrison at Newport Pagnell, where the Hitchin men still served. The governor, Sir Samuel Luke, writes to their Committee : ' I must confess it one of the greatest mercies that I have received of late that the towne was preserved when his Majesty's forces were last before it (xviii) ; for at that very time two of the Earl of Manchester's companies drew up one against another, and much hurt was done, and had I not interfered myself amongst them I do not know what ill consequences might not have followed ' (388. 176). In a ' Letter written out of Bedfordshire unto the Earl of Manchester and intercepted by one of His Majesty's Scouts,' the writer, who is thought to be a soldier of this same garrison, laments their sad conditions, which are ' no romances but sad truths as in good faith if they wake you not now from your lethargic dream I think you must sleep till the last trumpet.'

But it needed a louder voice than this to wake the Earl from his dreams—the trumpet tones of one who in this critical juncture seemed never to slumber nor sleep. ' It is now a time to speak, or forever hold the tongue. The important occasion now is no less than to save a nation out of a bleeding, nay, almost dying condition. . . . I do conceive that if the Army be not put into another method and the war more rigorously prosecuted, the people can bear the War no longer and will force you to

xviii. On October 6th Cromwell had written to warn Luke of a possible attack : ' I hope,' he says, ' if you heere of the Kinge's endeavouringe neere to these parts we shall have timely notice from you. . . . It will behove you to be vigilant because the Kinge horses his foote.'

a dishonourable peace' (388. 188). These memorable words spoken by Cromwell on December 9, 1644, together with the succeeding ordinance for the New Model, February 15, 1644–45, and the Self-Denying Ordinance (April 3rd), are the province of national not parochial history. We are concerned here with the echo only of these great events: the meeting of Committee after Committee to decide whether the Association should countenance the new proposals, and above all the stormy meeting at Bury St. Edmunds on January 30th, when mainly through the efforts of the Herts members it was resolved at midnight to submit 'the sad apprehension had by the people of these counties of the alteration of the Army now in Agitation in Parliament as that which will take away from them the head and body of their strength and leave them naked to the secret malignants at home and the watchful, enraged enemy abroad' (388. 192–94). Nevertheless, they promised that 'none of these discouragements or any private regard shall withdraw our zeal from the service of your honours the Parliament and the Kingdom.' The chief difficulty experienced in 'new-modelling' the army was to get recruits to serve under unknown captains and commanders. For a time there was great confusion. Cromwell's own regiment, in which some Hitchin men were serving, broke into open mutiny because they were 'to be put under another Col. and which was a Scotchman, but they have resolved not to lay down their arms, until, as they say, they have vindicated Col. Cromwell.' To preserve themselves from these mutineers, and from the hordes of new recruits who were plundering up and down the county, the Herts Committee recalled every soldier they possessed (386. 57). But when it was rumoured that Cromwell was after all to return to his command discipline began to prevail. His very name was enough. Twelve of the offenders were sentenced to death. Some blasphemers had their tongues bored through with hot irons.' The rest set about their drilling with a vengeance until one night at the end of April every town in Hertfordshire was roused by drum and trumpet proclaiming: 'That all officers and soldiers under the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax do presently (all excuse set apart, and notwithstanding any leave or pretence whatsoever) repair to their colours, and to be there to-morrow, the thirtieth of this instant, April, by twelve of the clock at noon at the farthest, upon pain of cashiering to the

officers and of death to the soldiers without mercy' (386. 57). Amongst the papers at Hitchin Priory there is a parchment roll five feet long which describes in close detail the eleven regiments of horse, the ten companies of dragooners, and the twelve regiments of foot which formed the New Model Army of 22,000 men (2. 41). It would appear that Edward Radcliffe procured this information in the hope of getting it through the Parliamentary lines, but in that he did not succeed. It is one of the few risks he is known to have taken.

X

Before two months were gone the King was to know well enough what the New Model, or, as he liked to call it, the 'New Noddle,' was made of. More especially and by painful experience was he to prove the mettle of those three thousand foot and one thousand horse which Colonel Cromwell, now Lieut.-General Cromwell, was raising at Hitchin and Cambridge and Bedford and the villages round about. His recruits came in, so the papers of that day declare, 'with incredible speed and alacrity . . . some of them are but raw soldiers, yet a little exercise will make them expert; a good cause and a good heart are two good prognostics of success.' 'Col. Cromwell,' says another diurnall, 'increases more and more' (386. 58). The talk is always of Cromwell. They trust him as they trust God Himself. His watchfulness is unsleeping; his words are law; his name is to be feared above all other names. His hour, indeed, had come. Quite early in the struggle, Bishop Williams, who, in the happy days when he dwelt at Buckden Palace, must have known Cromwell well, had prophesied to the King what was now coming to pass: 'Though of mean rank and age in the army, yet will he be sure to rise higher.' . . .'Every beast,' he went on to say, with a judgment which for him was strangely severe, 'every beast hath some evil properties, but Cromwell hath the properties of all evil beasts. My humble motion is that you win him over by promise of fair treatment or catch him by some stratagem and cut him off.' On June 12, 1645, two days before Naseby, according to the *Mercurius Civicus*, Cromwell with his one thousand horse and three thousand foot 'were about Bedford, Hitchin and Royston and are expected to come up to him [Sir Thomas Fairfax, then at Market Harborough] this night' (386. 58). It

has always been said that the mutilation of the apostles on the font of St. Mary's, and the martyrdom of the evangelists above the porch, was the work of Cromwell's Ironsides as they waited for the order to advance (10. 164). That so little damage was done may be due to their lack of time. There was in truth not a moment to lose, if they were to play their part in the battle. Already on the 11th the Hertfordshires had been ordered to leave Hitchin *en route* for Bedford and beyond. Cromwell, hearing that Fairfax 'marches towards the Enemy in the morning,' took six hundred of his picked horsemen with him and rode after them through the night of the 12th, and at daybreak on the 13th drew up in sight of Fairfax's army, 'which gave a mighty shout for joy of his coming to them' (386. 58).

From its terrible reverse at Naseby the Royal cause never recovered. There were, it is true, some temporary set-backs. Huntingdon was taken. The Cavaliers went to the gaol, 'which was then full of prisoners, felons and men condemned in law for gross robberies and murders, and set them free.' 'The liberated prisoners,' as one might expect to hear, 'have all taken up arms for his Majesty' (386. 60). Woburn, still nearer Hitchin, was stormed and set ablaze, 'many of its inhabitants being left harbourless, ruinated and undone.' But by December 1645 the Eastern Association was no longer in peril. On the 11th of that month, in the Church of St. Mary at Hitchin, 'public thanksgiving was rendered unto God for his singular mercies in preserving the said counties from the fury and violence of the enemy' (386. 60). Four months later still (April 28, 1646), His Majesty, having cut off his hair and beard, disguised himself as a servant and shouldered the cloak-bags of his two chaplains, was passing all unbeknown within three miles of Hitchin, a wanderer on the face of that part of the earth over which he had been called upon to rule. Seven days later he had surrendered himself to the Scots (386. 61).

When Charles passed by Hitchin again on June 26, 1647, he was a prisoner; not of the Scots on whose untender mercy he had cast himself, nor of the English Parliament who had had to pay their exorbitant allies the sum of £400,000 to recover their own King, but of the army who, by the stratagem of Cornet Joyce, had seized him into their own power and meant to use him for their own ends. For some time the antagonism between the civil and military power had been growing. Fairfax had

entreated the Speaker ' that there may be ways of love and composure thought upon.' But little or nothing had been done. ' The Foot and Train eighteen weeks in arrear with their pay, the Horse and Dragoons forty-three weeks in arrear,' were compelled to quarter themselves upon peaceable and poor people, who describe themselves in their petitions as ' eaten up, enslaved and destroyed by an army raised for their defence ' (386. 63). As a short way out of their troubles, Parliament proposed to disband part of the army and pack another part out of the kingdom on an Irish campaign. Hitchin was chosen as the rendez-vous for those who volunteered to follow Cromwell's lead and ' trayle a picke in that war of Ireland,' which, as he said at Saffron Walden, was ' a holy war, and that it would be a noble thing for all that were young men to engage for that kingdom.' Warwick, Waller and Massey, the Parliamentary Commissioners, tried their hardest to bribe and bully men to enlist in this crusade, but in the end only one officer set out for Hitchin, and he and his men were so ' black-legged ' by those they met on the road, that the majority altered their minds and made their way back to Walden (386. 64). The scheme for disbanding met with no better success. In spite of the glozing words which were uttered about their ' never-to-be-forgotten services,' they were not minded to be discharged without pay, without indemnities, and above all without the general settlement of the kingdom. But those memorable army conferences at Saffron Walden and Triplow Heath at which their grievances were discussed, and the subsequent march on London by way of Royston and Baldock and Stevenage, are already written in the chronicles of the kingdom in general. The parish of Hitchin, though so near to these high happenings, was not particularly concerned until the Royalist reaction had set in and the second civil war had begun.

XI

In July 1648 the Hertfordshire Committee were called upon to send two troops of horse and two companies of Dragoons against the Earl of Holland and the Duke of Buckingham, who had taken advantage of Fairfax's absence at the siege of Colchester to organize a rising on the other side of London. On the hearing of the news, Proclamation was made in the Hitchin

market-place by drum and trumpet, 'stirring up the hearts of the people' against this new attempt 'to involve this kingdome in more bloudy and desperate war' (386. 82). This time the men of Hitchin seem to have buckled on their harness without any previous bargaining for pay. All they asked was to be revenged on these 'malignants,' and in particular on Colonel Dalbier, their old quartermaster-general, who had basely sold his services to the other side. Galloping into Surrey, they joined the troops which Sir Michael Livesey had collected, just in time to defeat the Royalists at Kingston-on-Thames and drive them into their own county of Hertford. Through St. Albans and Redbourn and Markyate they pursued them, harassing the rear, but outside Luton, after a stubborn encounter, they lost touch with the enemy; with the exception of six troopers whom they discovered in the 'Sign of the Prince's Arms,' 'very merry and drinking of healths, their swords stuck into the ceiling of the chamber, their pistols lying by them and their hats upon the table; but by reason of their sudden surprisall, they soon left their quaffing and drinking and [were] forced to cry out in the chief of their jollity for mercy' (xix) (386. 82).

That same night (July 8th) Colonel Scroop, who had been dispatched with reinforcements from the force besieging Colchester, arrived at Hitchin, his troops half-dead with hard riding and his horses utterly spent. As it was dark on the next day before they were fit to travel, Colonel Scroop 'procured six good guides, two of whom were Captains of the Militia; these directed our party the nearest way to St. Needs [Neots], whither the enemy had gone.' At dawn they forced their way into the town, fighting, as one of the Royalists said, 'more like devils than men,' in such sudden, sanguinary fashion that they 'made short work' of the Earl's party. The Duke of Buckingham fled, but the Earl was taken prisoner, with 30 officers, '300 common men' and 200 horses, besides arms, and 'of gold and silver clothes a store.' As for Dalbier, who had fought like a lion, he was slain many times over; 'to express their detestation of his treachery, the soldiers hewed him in pieces!' (386. 85). On the following day the prisoners were brought to Hitchin and secured in the parish church, the persons of quality within the crypt, the rest, according to tradition, in the adjoining chapel. Meantime the countryside about Hitchin was being rounded up for such Royalists as

xix. *Bloudy News from Bedfordshire*, King's Pamphlets, Brit. Mus. E. 452.

CHARLES I

From the portrait in Hitchin Priory after Van Dyck. Fixed into the frame of this picture is a button from a waistcoat worn by the King on the day of his execution

were still at large. Amongst others Henry Docwra, of Highdown, was taken, who had not before been suspected as malignant. 'For being twelve hours in company with the Royalist forces,' he was fined £66 (xx) (361). It was rumoured also that a wounded cavalier of the name of Goring was lying concealed in Docwra's house. A search of the mansion met with no result, but, as the troopers came away baffled, they caught sight of him hiding in the hollow of the wych-elm outside the gateway. For him, alas! there was no question of a fine. He was dragged to the foot of the tree and there done to death in cold blood (xxi) (394).

On one of the pillars in the North Chapel of St. Mary's, where the prisoners were confined, someone of that period has cut the word 'Royall' and, close beside it, a decapitated head. It sets one thinking. Did one of those grim soldiers who guarded the prisoners beguile his tedium in this way and unconsciously show what bloody thoughts were already lurking in his mind? Nor in his only. From that time forward thousands of armed men were clamouring for vengeance against Charles Stuart, the man of blood. A 'cruel necessity' it was for some; a righteous sentence it appeared to many, when on January 27, 1649, he was adjudged to be 'a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy' and condemned to lose his head (xxii).

xx. From that time forward, and in spite of fines and imprisonments, the Docwras maintained the Stuart cause. Years afterwards, 1689, when all seemed lost, one finds Sir John Docwra saying stubbornly and seditiously that 'King William was no king, but King James was the right king, and that the parliament now sitting was no parliament, and that there would be no parliament till King James should get on his throne at Whitehall again' (72. 1. 384).

xxi. 'On the night of June 15th every year,' says Miss Ellen Pollard, the present occupant of Highdown, 'he rides headless on a white palfrey to the site of the cell in the grounds of Hitchin Priory.' But why June 15th, if he was not murdered till three weeks later, and why should this gallant cavalier wish to consort with Edward Radcliffe, who was hardly to be called a cavalier at all? It is a mystery. At midnight on June 15, 1925, for the sake of historical veracity, I marched round and round the Priory, but though I have good eyes and a lively imagination I did not behold any headless horseman. One needs to be an out-and-out cavalier to see these things (394).

xxii. Fixed into the frame of the Van Dyke painting of the King at Hitchin Priory there is a button which was cut from a waistcoat worn by him on his execution.

XII

The heart of Europe, it has been said, stood still with horror at the execution of the King. To those in Hertfordshire who had endured on his account six years of outrage and rapine and civil war, it seemed not quite so incredible and monstrous. Good Mr. Geree, the independent minister of St. Albans, who had exhorted them so often at St. Mary's, 'died,' says Baxter, 'at the news of the King's death' (386. 91). To Edward Radcliffe it was as though the end of the world had come. In violent haste he writes out a 'Terrier of all my lands,' puts his affairs in order, and waits for the heavens to fall (363). But, so far as one may tell, the common people of Hitchin stood by what was done. Those of them who were Fifth Monarchists rejoiced exceedingly, for the reign of King Jesus was at hand. Those who were Independents were soon disputing and praying about the constitution of their new republic. As a matter of form it was decreed in the market-place that 'whosoever shall proclaim a new King, Charles Second or another, without authority of Parliament in this nation of England shall be a traitor and suffer death' (386. 94). But no one here was disposed to die for another Charles. They had passed beyond that, and in their zeal and exaltation were considering rather how to cut off the heads of all their other oppressors. Within fifteen days of the execution of the King, the inhabitants of Hitchin had signed a Petition and Remonstrance which made it plain that their hearts at any rate had not ceased to beat nor their resolves to fail. In plain and independent terms they denounce 'certain wretched, scandalous Priests still as ever reading the Common Prayers, and certain rigded Presbyters so proud and covetous that their little fingers are heavier than their predecessors loynes.' They go on to speak of 'the oppression of Great Men either in Coppyholds or Tithes, and the subtelty of the Lawyers who caterpillar-like eat and devour all they possibly can, not regarding equity or justice, but how to get money right or wrong; the oppression of the Norman Laws in an unknown tongue and the cruel practice of the same by vipers; the towle of Markets that none may sell their corne; the lords of manors who keep us in bondage like Egyptian Task-Masters.' The petitioners point out how 'with purse and person' they have stood to the Parliamentary

cause all through, 'some of us borrowing money at 8% to lend to the Army. If our wives had but a Ring or a silver spoon they presently carried it to Guild-hall for publique use and had no other end in it but the recovery of long-lost Freedom. And many poor honest-hearted men that had not 30 shils. in the world did spare 20 of it to buy a Musket in this contest. And now we declare to the whole World that we are resolved never to look back to Pharaoh's bondage again: we confess we are brought into the Wilderness and there we meet with hardship and difficulty but we are resolved for the Land of Promise in the power of the Lord of Hosts and the God of all those our mercies we have already received' (350. *e.* 544. 6).

It is still very much the fashion to make fun of the Scripture language of 'these straight-haired, snuffling, whining saints.' In their own day and generation also they suffered for it. John Collop, a Hitchin poet and physician of that time, cannot abide the sight of them—'each face,' he says, 'a vizard of hypocrisie.' In the 'besprinklings of a retirement while Democritus-like I laugh at the Shuttle-cock World, its mad Rabble and Plebian heads,' he refers to them as

> Snails of all heresies which contract the slime,
> Spunges which suck in all the dregs of time,
> Mixed with the puddle of their fancies wine.'

But the world as he finds it is just their world, 'a wilderness of hardship and difficulty.' So he sings of it in his turgid, untuneful way:—

> 'The world's a monster in whose will's a bell,
> Where passions, devil-like, tormenting dwell,
> Where shattered senses placed in array
> The soul's ruine menace and our life's decay' (372).

There is one memorable line in his *Poesie Revived*, a line written in that Scripture language which in others he abhorred, wherein, thinking of his own church, a church suffering martyrdom with her Royal Master, he nevertheless lifts up his heart, and in the midst of hopelessness is full of hope. 'Faith,' he exclaims, 'Faith through a Red Sea makes her way.' As yet they were but in the midst. For Collop and his tribe there was to be more shedding of blood and eleven long years of wandering in the wilderness before the Promised Land was reached. As for

those who had escaped from the House of Bondage, they were fated to wade on through further seas of blood and find no promised land at all. A vision of it, indeed, they were vouchsafed from afar ; at times they seemed to be entering in ; but the curse of blood dogged their footsteps, until at last the saying was fulfilled that ' all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'

XIII

Within six months of the King's execution, Cromwell set out to avenge the innocent blood that had been shed in Ireland. This time the ' Crusade ' was taken up with a will. The goodly sum of eighty-two pounds was subscribed in Hitchin for the campaign, and many a veteran rejoined the ranks (359). When the garrison at Newport Pagnell was ' slighted ' some time previously, it had been suggested that ' all the officers and soldiers be entertained and employed for the service of Ireland.' Those who volunteered were to receive one month's pay as a gratuity ; those who refused were to forfeit their horses and arms. By the precaution of the authorities, instructions were issued at the same time ' for any mutiny that may ensue ' ; and as the whole garrison refused to be hectored into foreign service and broke into open revolt, the Governor ' disbanded all.' But in 1649 many Hitchin men who had been disbanded and had grown weary of the tedium of civil life were willing enough to ' trail a pike ' anywhere, even into Ireland. The pay was good ; they were to be led by the Lord-General himself ; they could serve either in the regiment of their own Colonel, Thomas Sadleir, of Temple Dinsley, who was soon to be promoted to Adjutant-General, or in that of Captain Nathaniel Wilmer, brother of John Wilmer, the Puritan vicar of Hitchin, who, having been a grocer in the city, allied himself by marriage to Bulstrode Whitelocke, one of the Council of State for the Republic, and was by his influence supplied with a commission (391). Under one or the other of these officers they set out upon the pacification of Ireland, and gave an excellent account of themselves.

In an official dispatch to the House of Commons, dated April 2, 1650, Cromwell speaks with commendation of the way in which Sadleir with only two guns reduced the garrisons of Ballydoyne, Graney and Dunhill. ' Summoning Pulkerry,' he proceeds, ' a garrison under Clonmell, Sadleir battered it ; they

refusing to come out, stormed it, put thirty or forty of them to the sword, and the rest remaining obstinate were fired [i.e. burnt to death] in the Castle' (364). By the end of 1651 the pacification was more or less completed. Wilmer decided to settle at Cashel. Sadleir, who was made first governor of Wexford and then of Galway, planted some of the Hitchin soldiers upon the confiscated lands and kept others employed in demolishing the religious houses of the Papists. They in their turn kept the Governor employed, for when they saw the daughters of Ireland that they were fair, they desired—nay even demanded—to have them in marriage, which troubled Sadleir exceedingly. 'What,' he asks the Commissioners at Dublin, 'what shall be done with Irishwomen which are Papists, and are married to Englishmen and Protestants?' (392 & 396).

As this was a problem which was going to take more than a generation to solve, we may leave Sadleir (xxiii) and his fellow-settlers on their plantations and make our way back to England. Most of the Hitchin volunteers, there seems reason to believe, had returned with Cromwell in 1650, and may have taken part in the Battle of Dunbar (September 3rd), and in the 'crowning mercy' of Worcester which befell on the same day in the following year. That some Hitchin men fought in this final battle is certain; for, when two regiments from Norfolk and two from Suffolk marched through the town on their way to Worcester, several ex-soldiers took French leave to go along with them and see the war to an end.

XIV

If that country is to be counted happy which has no history, then Hitchin throughout the Commonwealth should have been happy indeed. There is surprisingly little to record. After eight years of alarms and excursions there is a silence as of a deserted battlefield—a silence that can be felt. At last the war was won. The pacification of England was complete. As

xxiii. In 1655 Sadleir had the honour of commanding the Irish Brigade which was sent that year into England. In 1656 he was appointed one of the Commissioners for Ireland, 'for the security of His Highness the Lord Protector, His Person, and continuance of the Nation in Peace and Safty.' From 1656–59 he continued as Governor of Galway for the Commonwealth. At the Restoration he was suspected of intriguing against the Government and was arrested, but, being set at liberty, he retired to the estate he had acquired in co. Tipperary, and seems so far to have reconciled himself to the Government as to be made High Sheriff of the county in 1666 (396).

tidings of great joy had come the summons to disband: 'To your tents, O Israel; this realm shall be no longer as an armed camp.' The man of blood had gone to his account. His son had fled beyond the seas. The reign of saints had begun. Well might they magnify the Lord, well might they rejoice in God their Saviour, as they put out the arms of the King from St. Mary's Church and put in the Commonwealth arms. Once again the ancient promise had been fulfilled: 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble and meek.'

It was to be a new sort of happiness, a happiness purified of all worldly taint; for along with the King they were minded to cast out many other evils. Never again, for example, should any citizen be tempted to take pleasure in empty and irreligious shows. No longer on high-holidays might the vulgar flock to Bull Corner for bear-baiting and bull-baiting as of old. No longer might the Morris-dancers flock out of church and find their bells laid ready for them in the porch, where the wardens used to keep them. The Maypole was banished from Bridge Street. The song of the Hitchin Mayers was heard no more in the streets. The strolling players who once put up their booth in the market square had now become Statute-barred. By another decree Christmas Day had been made a day of fasting and humiliation. With these carnal enticements removed, it may be imagined how zealously the good people of Hitchin gave themselves up to the joys of psalm-singing, pious ejaculations and unceasing prayers. It was, while it lasted, a paradise for Puritans (386. 193).

Then arose Samuel Chidley, of Hitchin, a Puritan of Puritans, Fifth Monarchist, Leveller, Lilburnian, Millenarian and all; a religious fanatic who loathed the sinful contentment of this sorry world and suffered unspeakably in his own heart for all the oppression that was done under the sun. As far back as 1647 his impatience had exploded in a plot 'to murder the King, divide the army, levell the Nobillity and Gentry, and abolish the Protestant Religion,' for which most horrid designs he had been committed to the Gate-House (358). By 1650 he was again at large, and though by trade only 'a seller of stockings,' was in possession of enough money (£1,874 14s. 6d.) to purchase the lordship of Hitchin Manor (135). Two years later he wrote the first of a long succession of pamphlets which come like a torrent into the placid stream of our parochial life and bear it

away to the ocean of national affairs. Having sharpened his tongue in a skirmish first with the Baptists and then with the Presbyterians, and having made it clear that 'God never appointed holy things for dogs and such as are without the New Jerusalem, but those that keep God's Commandments,' he then proceeds to reveal by whom and in what way those commandments have been broken. Others if they please may spend their time snivelling of psalms; for him there is already another war to wage.

His first attack, delivered on April 14, 1652, is entitled *A Cry against a Crying Sinne: or a just complaint to the Magistrates against them who have broken the Statute Laws of God by killing of men for Theft* (366). It does Chidley much honour that he should be one of the earliest to protest against the cruel inequality of that age in its criminal procedure. One is bound at the same time to admire the high value he puts on human life ('The jewell of one man's life not all your estates can balance') and the courage with which he rebukes injustice in high places. It certainly was no fault of Chidley's that the reform he cried for did not come at once, unless indeed he may be blamed for crying too long and too loud. Unfortunately the way of peaceful persuasion was not his. To begin with, he prints the pamphlet in red ink just to remind the 'judges or executioners of such over-much justice' how they 'are defiling the Land with Bloud.' Then too he will go bursting into their courts when they are trying these very cases and rudely demand to be heard. 'Great men,' so he began his remarks to the Commissioners of Oyer and Terminer at Newgate, 'great men are not always wise, neither do the aged always understand judgement' (xxiv). And yet he seems astonished and pained that he was 'commanded to depart and, not doing so, was put out of court.' 'After I was put out,' he continues, 'they gave sentence against the prisoner at the bar, who was arraigned for stealing, and would not hold up his hand nor plead, but besought them that the letter (Chidley's) might be read publicly, that all the Bench might hear, and then, said he, afterwards I will plead whatsoever comes of it, whether I live or dye; but they would not hearken unto him, but proceeded, and by the Recorder, Mr. Steele,

xxiv. There is an echo in these words of what Henry Denne, one of the Hitchin Lecturers, had said in 1641: 'Do you not remember what was whispered at the Assizes some years past, that the Great Malefactors condemned the little ones?'

who was their mouth, gave sentence against him: That he should goe from thence to the place whence he came, and should be stript naked, only his privy members covered and his head covered, and his arms to be stretched forth both on one side and on the other as far as they could be stretched, and that he should be laid on his backe, and have as much weight laid upon him as he was able to bear and more; and the next day he should have only three morsels of Barley bread without any drink, and the day following three draughts of the kennel water running under Newgate as much as he could drink, and so to remain in that condition from day to day till he dyed.' It is not to be wondered at that the gorge of this champion of human liberty should rise at a sentence like this. It was the law, no doubt—*peine forte et dure*, for such as would not plead—but it was not *the* law. 'It is time for the Lord to wake,' he cried, 'for they have made void Thy law.' 'Surely,' he continues in his sentence on these judges, 'surely such men, though they pretend even so much religion, are not fit to pray, nor to be prayed with; for when they stretch forth their hands God will hide his eyes; and though they make many prayers, he will not hear them whose heads are full of blood.' There is undoubtedly much waving of the hand and wild talk in these pages, but there is sound reasoning too. 'The persons who are arraigned before you,' he points out, 'are poor laborers and creatures who stole things of a small value, peradventure for meer necessity, yet you arraign them for their lives when the law of God requireth their preservation in such a way that they may make satisfaction.' If it were left to him, he would compel a thief to render double 'if the theft be found in his hands,' and fourfold 'if he have made it away. If he be worth nothing let him be sold, work in the mines, heave coal, or row in Gallies. If he will not worke then he must not eate.' His most cogent argument is yet to come: 'This murdering law,' he argues, 'is the cause wherefore many murders are committed by Robbers in the act of stealing, for the thieves know it is a hanging matter to steal, and its no more to commit murder, and then for safety of their lives and to hide their theft they commit murder' (366).

Getting no satisfaction out of the judges, Chidley forces his pamphlet on the Lord President Bradshaw and begs him to read it before the Council of State. He then tries it in all confidence upon the House of Commons: 'May not the Parliament,'

he exclaims, 'by the west wind of their Legislative Power blow such combustible stubble away.' It seemed as though his words returned unto him void; yet before long, September 16, 1656, in the same House, Cromwell himself was to recoin them and use them as his own: 'To hang a man for six-pence, three-pence, I know not what, is a thing that God will reckon for, and I wish it may not be upon this nation a day longer than you have an opportunity to give a remedy.'

Meantime Chidley, almost in despair, made his final appeal to the common people of England, who are 'more moved to mercy than those who govern them.' On the next execution for theft at Tyburn, he elbowed his way through the crowd, nailed his pamphlet on a tree that stood by the gallows, and wrote this warning above:—

> 'Cursèd be that bloody hand
> Which takes this down without command.'

There it remained, he says, 'a witness against such cursed proceedings of murdering men merely for stealing food and rayment; and was read by many both before and after the execution and it is thought will stand there till it drop away' (366).

XV

We have dwelt at some length on this crusade of Samuel Chidley, because it affords a pious pleasure to rescue from undeserved oblivion one who probably rescued many of his tenants from the clutches of the law in that year of dreadful destitution 1653. Who would mind being 'in mercy' to such a lord for those thefts 'of meer necessity,' which so many starving copyholders were driven to commit? They were lucky, indeed, to have fallen into the hands of one who rejoiced to maintain the cause of the poor, for they were soon to lose from Hitchin Priory the lady who had nursed and nourished them so many years. 'A vertuous and religious woman,' writes Chauncy, who lived near enough to know and who wished to commend her example to posterity, 'a wise and indulgent wife, courteous and obliging to her neighbours, knowing and skilful in chirurgery, always ready to help the lame and indigent, bountiful and charitable to the poor; kept her Family in great Order, governed it

with much Discretion, and died about the year 1656 to the great Grief of all that knew her' (8. 2. 167).

In his next fulmination, which bears the startling title of *Thunder from the Throne of God*, 1653, Chidley inveighs 'against the Temples of Idols,' and like a true Leveller would have them razed to the ground (369). This pamphlet has to be read with one of the same year entitled *Bells Founder confounded, or Sabianus confuted with his damnable sect* (368), and with another published three years later, *An invective against Cathedral Churches, Church-Steeples, Bells, etc.*, which has an engraved frontispiece representing the destruction of Whitcomb church in Devon by a thunderstorm during service-time (373). It was incumbent upon him, he explains, to treat of these matters, because 'God hath put his own right hand in his bosom and doth not display his oracles as in the ancient days.' It is appointed for His servants to deliver His messages instead: 'When thou art converted, help to convince the rest of those poor blind, doted, bewitched people whom Satan hath ensnared. . . . We are to weane these superstitious persons from their idolatrous opinions, from doting upon detestable things.' 'Therefore,' he goes on to say in his invective, 'therefore, although these towers of Babel are builded to reach up to heaven, and some of them have as many steps in height as there are days in the year (xxv), down with them and their Babylonish bells to the very ground; and let not a stone of them remain upon another.' He will not hear a word in their defence: 'They are the Pope's Pillars, for they were erected by the Catholic Papists in honour to their Popish Gods. Down with these old Chyming chimneys of the drunken whore of Babylon.' 'We have broken the organs to pieces,' he continues, 'the crosses, the maypoles, the altar rails and fonts. Now let us take down these abominable bells which instead of being devoted to superstition and idolatry should belong to the commonwealth.' He would have them be 'metamorphosed into roring Canons and charged with gun-powder and flying bullets against the gates of our enemies'! Having demolished the temples, he then proceeds to demolish the priests, 'the ambitious and corrupt Clergy,' as Pym described them, 'who preached down the laws of God and the Liberties of the Kingdom.' Chidley rejoices at their downfall, would have

xxv. If Chidley ever groped his way up the newel staircase of St. Mary's Tower, he could have counted seventy-five steps.

them hunted from place to place, and no relics of their superstition spared: 'It is a common thing,' he observes, 'for the Prophane wretched scum—even the Parliament's bitter adversaries—to say, "What harm was in the crosses which the Parliament pulled down, what harm was in the May Poles that were pulled down?" I say they were abominable idols and the Devil's Baits to draw men into abominable wickednesse.' As Chidley is hopeful that the Parliament will go on with the good work of pulling down, he inscribes this pamphlet 'to His Highness, the Lord Protector, and to the Parliament of England,' and addresses them in all courtesy as 'Valiant Swordsmen and Honourable Gentlemen' (373). He was slowly learning the arts and graces of political persuasion.

Chidley's next pamphlet is one of considerable importance, because it deals with a grievance which was sapping the loyalty of soldiers and ex-soldiers alike, and was no mean factor in bringing about the ultimate collapse of the Commonwealth. It was, to put it bluntly, a question of money. The Government was in straits. To many people this will appear surprising. It appeared surprising even to the people of that day. When Sir Robert Howard, the Steward of Hitchin Manor, asked Milton what made him side with the Republicans, Milton answered, amongst other reasons, 'because theirs was the most frugal government; for that the trappings of a monarchy might set up an ordinary Commonwealth' (379). Perhaps the English Commonwealth was extraordinary; at any rate it was never financially set up. At the time that Chidley wrote, moreover, compoundings of Royalists' estates were no longer a Royal source of revenue; nearly all the Crown and Church lands had been sold. And so it came about that whilst Cromwell was making the name of England glorious in every land, whilst Blake was making it no less glorious on every sea, at home the soldiers were not paid their wages, the maimed and sick were kept waiting for their pensions, the widows and fatherless were left destitute. Here was a crying scandal after Chidley's own heart; one of those great occasions for which he saved his strength: 'If I am a Leveller,' he once said, 'I am no Leveller of the Vallies, but a Leveller of the Mountains, that the way of Jesus Christ may be prepared.' In this matter he was resolved to be more than a pamphleteer and to play a principal part. 'I had a designe in this,' he says, 'not only for God and for the reputa-

tion of the nation, but for the satisfaction of a thousand men who entrusted me to act and manage their business for them.' It was on their behalf that he issued his *Remonstrance to the valiant and well-deserving Souldier and the rest of the creditors of the Commonwealth*, a document which even at this day one cannot read unmoved (367). 'The Widdows and Fatherless,' he says, 'are forced to complain of the vanity and deceit of men in high degree, and shed their precipitous tears upon the footsteps of their oppressors as water spilt on the ground which no man gathereth up.'

'You would have thought,' he proceeds, that 'the price of bloud is very precious and the loss of life is the loss of losses; but it is little regarded of them. They have more respect to their brute beasts than to men who were made in the image of God.' 'Above seven or ten years,' he points out, 'have many of them waited.' This is not the exaggeration of a special pleader. There is extant a petition of Johanne Whitaker, of Hitchin, in 1650, stating 'that she is a very poor woman and has three small children to maintain, and that her husband Richard Whitaker was slain in the Parliamentary service at Edge-Hill,' eight years before (72. 1. 92). As late as 1659, on the very brink of the Restoration, John Dallom, otherwise Joyner, of Hitchin, is still petitioning 'that a pension may be granted to him, he having been impressed at Hitchin for service during the late wars under the Parliament and Commonwealth, during which service he received hurts that disable him from gaining a living' (xxvi) (72. 1. 129). But what was the good of petitioning? As Chidley says, 'They make the Public Faith to go round like a horse in a mill, and thereby grind the faces of the poor and stop their eares at the cry.' The only remedy, as he sees it, is 'a total removal of corrupt lawyers and other mercenary self-seekers out of the House, who are the prime obstructors.' As for the public officials, they perpetually clamour for bribes, 'according to the universale disease that is inbred amongst all clerks.' He had evidently suffered many things at their hands, and as he refused to grease their palms he was likely to suffer more. 'Many a weary step,' he tells his disappointed clients, 'have we taken to finde them owte in their nooks and crooks;

xxvi. In the end, after years of waiting, he was allowed a pension of 40s. a year, with the stipulation that he must keep his wife and children out of it also.

with lanthorne and candle-light have they been sought, by night and day have they been followed, whether Frost or Snow, Wet or Dry, 'twas all one.' Even when he tracked them down he could get no satisfaction. 'It is more difficult,' he says in his picturesque way, 'to get a Committee together to do any good, than to hale five bears to a stake.' They do nothing 'but spin out precious time; if they but alter a few lines, they think they have made a large progress in it, enough for a whole week.' Hear, then, his conclusion of the whole matter: it is full of despair and foreboding: 'You well-affected and valiant Souldiers that have born the heat and burden of the day. You have born the sword for naught.' It is not, after all, to be the reign of King Jesus, 'for the red horse of war prevaileth, and peace is taken from the earth, and the chambers of the world are hanged with discontent. . . . As for those who have perished already for want of what was their due, which should have supported them, the rich men must answer for it, who are called upon to weep and howle for the miseries which are coming upon them' (367).

XVI

The reign of the Major-Generals, proclaimed soon after this, must have confirmed Chidley's utmost fears. A piece of pure despotism he no doubt thought it, though most people were glad enough to have the protection of strong government at any price. In a letter to Cromwell, dated March 3, 1655, Sir John Read, Lord of the Manor of Minsden, and one of the Commissioners appointed 'to promote the public peace and weal for Herts,' expresses satisfaction at 'the appointment of the Lord Fleetwood (Deputy of Ireland) as Major-General of the county. . . . We do unfeignedly profess there could none have been nominated more welcome or received with greater affection and good will.' Whatever the Fifth Monarchists or even the army might say, the common people of England were proud of their Protector. They rejoiced that his right arm was as strong in the time of peace as it had been in the time of war. 'In all sincerity,' continues Sir John Read, 'we profess that in our stations and places we look uppon it as a duty much incumbent uppon us to bee assisting to your highnesse, that you neither faint nor wax weary in your very greate and important undertakings, but may continue steady and strong, upon the decomfiture of all God's enemyes,

who, either abroade or within this Commonwealthe, shall oppose the power of Godlinesse or designe the breach of our present peace' (371).

But the breaking-point, so far as Chidley was concerned, came in 1657 with the project to make Cromwell king. 'O ye chosen and betrusted Princes of England,' he bursts out in another pamphlet, 'what is in your minds, that now ye are about to set up a King over us again; since we have been set free by your predecessors who after long and large experience abolished the Kingship. And Oliver, Lord Protector, consented heartily thereto as in charity we verilie believe.' The Instrument of Government might have its faults, but what possible reason could be advanced for such a thing? Was their condition, after all, so lamentable? 'The kingly office being utterly abolished with the House of Lords as useless and burthensome, God went on with his mercies, crowning the Commonwealth with many victories; the peoples have been subdued by us and nations under our feet, as if the most high God had taken upon him to be King of the good people of England as formerly of Israel.' The more Chidley thinks of it the more indignant he becomes: 'Take heed,' he cries, 'take heed, O ye Senators of England, lest you intangle this Commonwealth again with the grevious and intolerable Yoak of Regal and Tyrannical bondage.' From warnings he proceeds to threats, relating with evident relish 'the untimely ends to which many such kings have justlie come. Yea, Tophet is ordained of old for Kings in a special manner, Isaiah, 30. 33' (xxvii). At the very utmost their prosperity is but for a season: 'What safety or security,' he asks the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England, to whom his words are addressed, 'can we expect from one whose life is but a vapour? Are you sure his children will be right and just? It is to be feared that such a regal choise will involve the Commonwealth in a chaos of confusion and beget a second most cruel, bloody and unnatural war and lay the land open to a forreine enemie, and so the last errour will be worse than the first.' Why, then, he asks in his summing up, will they rush headlong to destruction? 'You know the Scripture, Law, Reason, good-men's writings,

xxvii. On a wall in an upper room of 90, Bancroft, Hitchin, there was formerly to be seen a distempered painting of this same Tophet: kings and queens writhing with horrible torments in the stream of brimstone, and the house of their fame crumbling into fine dust before the breath of the Lord.

Parliamentary Sermons, the nation's Ingagement and Articles of Government to be all against it; and so is an honest and unperjured English heart' (374).

No one will ever know what part this pamphlet may have played in the decision of Cromwell to draw back from that lust of kingship, after which his soul and perhaps his statesmanship had hankered. But it was the plain-speaking of his early friends, and more particularly a conversation that he had with Fleetwood at this time, which altered the direction of his mind. For England the decision may have been momentous; for Cromwell himself it was not long to matter. His health already had begun to fail. The burden of affairs and his private sorrows had slowly borne him down. Chidley was right in what he said. The life of man—the life even of this man of iron—was but a vapour that passeth away. It seemed incredible that this tower of strength which had sustained England through the fiercest of her storms should ever crumble and fall, but fall it did on that night of storm, September 3, 1658, and great was the fall thereof.

XVII

With Cromwell's death the last act of this historical tragedy hastens to its conclusion in ever-deepening fatality and gloom. Once again Chidley was right. The Lord-Protector had left his people unprotected. Richard, or Tumble-down-dick as he was called (xxviii), was not the man to revive that mighty power which lay buried in his father's grave. Nor was Fleetwood; nor was Lambert. For a brief moment they strut across the stage, rant awhile, and make their ignominious exits. From becoming a prey to these rival army chieftains the country was saved by the sagacity of General Monck, but even he could not or would not save them from the 'cruel necessity' of having another king.

To those who had fought under Cromwell and borne the heat and burden of the day, it was astounding, indeed it was revolting, to hear the cry going on every hand: 'Nay, but we will have a King to reign over us.' There must, after all, be

xxviii. This nickname was perpetuated at Hitchin in the name of a beer-house, 'The Tumble-down-dick,' in Back Street. But in course of time the house itself tumbled down, and, though there were several families of Monk living in the street, not one of them brought about a restoration. Charles II was commemorated by the sign of 'The Royal Oak' in Bridge Street.

some magic in this glittering title which they had never understood; or else it was but another and a crowning example of the inconstancy of the common herd: *Vox populi, vox diaboli.* In the whirligig of time what curious revenges, what strange ironies occur! Who could have guessed that those who abolished the kingship would so soon be entreating the prince whom they had banished to return; or that he alone could save the country from a third civil war who with his father had occasioned the other two!

And so the King came into his own again. In London, whither Collop, the Hitchin poet, had hastened to lay his ode of congratulation (*Itur Satyricum*) before His Majesty's returning feet; in London, on that memorable May 29th, there was a kingly welcome from a thousand bells and the booming of Monck's heavy guns. All anxious thoughts were banished as folk watched the long procession pass, threading its way with difficulty amongst the cheering crowds, whilst like a descant from the balconies above crowned with light-hearted girls could be heard the cadence of their singing as they waved to and fro in time their tapestries and flags. In many another royal city of England it was a day of bonfires (xxix) and roast beef; the Maypoles were set up again surmounted with the crown; the gutters foamed with ale. In the Royal manor of Hitchin, on the other hand, one hears of no rejoicing. Puritans they had been, and Puritans they remained. For such it was a day of fasting and humiliation. The Lord had humbled them even to the dust. They were wondering—especially the Ironsides amongst them—wondering furiously behind their impassive faces what God and Cromwell would say. Had they not lost everything for which they fought? The King, it was said, had promised an indemnity for all save regicides and 'liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences in opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom.' But who would trust the promise of a Stuart ever again? In this matter also time would show.

There is a silence about the Restoration in Hitchin far more significant than guns, far more illuminating than bonfires. It

xxix. Collop in his ode has an especial use for bonfires:—

'Make Bon-fires bigger, purge th' infected air,
Lest Treason like a Plague inhabit there.'

is broken by a solitary cry, the cry of one Edward Stone, who put into terrible and treasonable words the dumb anguish that was devastating all their hearts: 'If ever the Devil is abroad,' he was charged with having said as he listened to the guns firing on Coronation Day, 'if ever the Devil is abroad, he is abroad *now*!' (72. 1. 137).

THE CHURCHWARDENS (i)

I

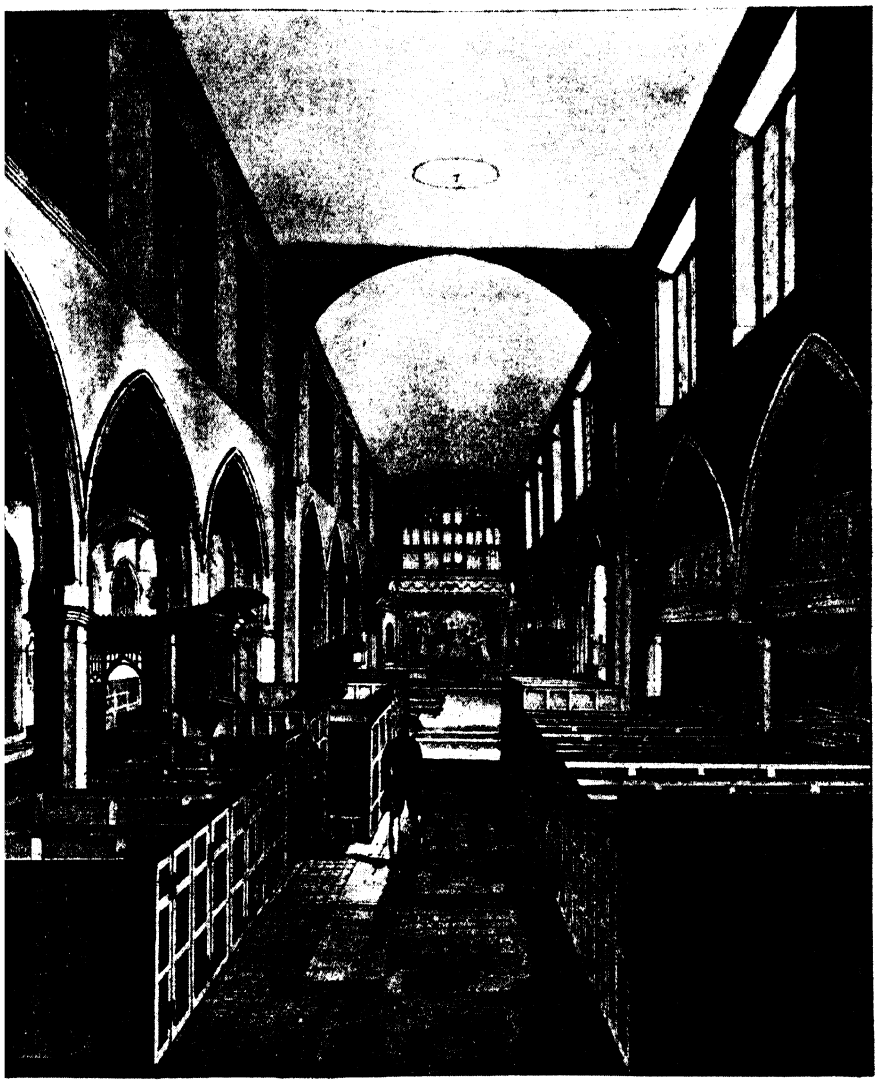
STOWED away in the ringers' gallery of St. Mary's tower you may find some forty volumes of manuscript in folio, exuding the musty smell an antiquary loves, and still sprinkled with the dust of Hanover and Stuart days. I wonder often that their pages are so rarely turned. Many, I confess, are dull and all of them are dirty; the earlier ones need practised eyes to read; but, these disadvantages apart, it is here and here only that you can discover something of the familiar history of the township and the church of Hitchin. For such a purpose the formal histories are of little use. The mere citizen is left unmoved by a tale of the devolution of manors, the lineage of noble families, the fortunes of such as Baliol and Devorgoil, who hardly knew among their widely separated fiefs that the vill of Hicca was in their lordly keeping. We want rather to know what befell ordinary mortals like ourselves here in Hitchin in the days gone by; how they earned, how they spent their money; in what fashion they were clothed and housed; what they murmured in the vestry; what they put upon the road; with what reverence they served their mother-church; with what careful wisdom they provided for God's poor. We want in effect that plain, unvarnished tale of submerged humanity's nine-tenths which in their loftiness the earlier chroniclers ignored.

It is only in such manuscripts that you can glimpse these lower levels of life, and then only in a side glance, as it were. But, to those who have eyes to see, these accounts of the churchwardens, surveyors, constables, bellmen and overseers, these apprenticeship indentures and charity records, are a revelation. In sympathetic hands they serve as a talisman from which as by psychometry one may recast the fashion of the former times.

* * * * *

First of all let us look into the Churchwardens' Accounts,

i. I have to thank Professor Hamilton Thompson for reading and revising this chapter in its manuscript form.



From an engraving by W. H. Oldmeadow of a drawing by J. C. Oldfield, *circa* 1830

which cover the period from Charles II's day to the reign of William IV. Unhappily the earlier accounts are lost.

The main thing that strikes one in turning over the leaves is the diversity of civil and ecclesiastical affairs then vested in these voluntary officials. As guardians of public dignity, for example, they were expected to do and to provide the proper thing. On great days they never failed to have the church bells rung, and to fête the ringers with an abundance of beer; with the result, of course, that no anniversary, however mean, was ever allowed to lapse. '1714. Laide owte on crownation daie for vittailes for the ringers, 12s.' (ii). They were ringing for the coronation of good Queen Bess a hundred and seventy years after she had died. They pealed for the Prince of Orange (who became William III) in the reign of the second George. They rang without fail to the confusion of Papists on Gunpowder Treason Day. They celebrated every possible birth, accession, coronation, marriage and death day of those in dominion over them. Indeed, it was not until the famine years of the French Wars that it occurred to the wardens to check this growing and costly abuse: '1809. It is recommended at the vestry that the future churchwardens give directions for discontinuing the ringing of bells at Festivals, which is considered an unnecessary expense to the parish' (202).

In these Ringers' Accounts one may follow the rough outline of English affairs right through the Georgian era. In 1739 (November 6th) the Hitchin ringers were given 5s. to ring out the declaration of that war which Walpole was rushed into against his better judgment. I wonder if they were told what the great minister said: 'They may ring their bells now, but they will soon be wringing their hands'—a prophecy which the unhappy issues of that struggle amply justified. At the time of Prince

ii. In this chapter the giving of the year of each disbursement is considered a sufficient reference, for in the eight volumes of the Churchwardens' Assessments and Accounts described in the Bibliography, No. 400, it is the assessments which occupy most of the pages. The disbursements occupy but little space, and each year's items are easily found. If necessary, the student can get further help from the Epitome and Index to these Accounts which was compiled in 1906. See No. 234. Many of the items given in this chapter are there set out in full. References are therefore given in this chapter only when the item concerned comes not from the volumes of accounts, but from the 'sundry documents and loose accounts' described in No. 401, or from the Priory MSS., No. 2, or from the Archidiaconal Library of MSS. at Huntingdon, No. 3, or from the Vestry Minute Books, No. 202, or from the uncalendared records of the Herts Quarter Sessions, No. 402.

Charlie's rising in 1745, the Duke of Bedford's agent came to Hitchin to raise soldiers for the King. The churchwardens gave an official reception, wrote out recruiting placards, and nailed them about the town, while the bells rang furiously to encourage a martial spirit. On April 27th the same year is the item, ' To beer, for ringing for a victory obtained by His Royal Highness over the rebels, 5s.,' the record of the bloody massacre at Culloden Moor (iii). Twelve years later they were ringing a peal of good-luck ' for the King of Prusha,' then starting out upon the Seven Years' War. In 1759 there is a ringers' rouse ' for the taking of Quebec,' and the following year the bells are ' towling for the King's beruin.'

On May 21, 1782, the ringers were given 5s. on the occasion of Rodney's victory over the French Fleet; and another 5s. in 1797, when the Spanish Fleet was smashed off Cape St. Vincent. All through this long succession of wars you come across items that seem strangely familiar to our day, e.g. ' 1729. Carrying soldiers to Bedford, £2 2s. od.; 1729. Paid Mr. Hurst to carry the king's baggage to Hertford, 15s.; 1732. Spent at the Swan and other places to settle the soldiers, 1/8.' There was frequent trouble over the billeting. In 1740 the townsmen marched to the ' Sun ' and complained to the justices sitting there in petty sessions, with the result that the troops were quartered in the Bridewell for a time. The year before that, the churchwardens paid 3s. for a horse ' for a corporal to seek a deserter,' and two years earlier still were forced to spend money given for spiritual purposes in providing guns, gunpowder, shot and fetters to keep some prisoners secure. In 1808 a quantity of lead was stripped off the church roofs in the dead of night, and the soldiers, being confessedly short of ammunition, were suspected of converting it to that use. The wardens whipped out warrants on the moment and threatened to make a scandal, but the affair was hushed up and no further action taken (401. 10).

Not only the pomp and circumstance of war but its piteousness and its poverty are reflected in these pages. Here are two doles which, if it were not for the dates, might have been made in the time of the Crusades: ' 1692. Paid for relieving 3 that came out of Jerusolam, 1s.'; and this, ' 1745. Gave a poor

iii. The entry of this event in the register of an adjoining village is as follows: ' Paid to the ringers for routing the rebells,' as though the ringers had done it all.

man who had been a Turkey slave and had his tongue cut out, 1s.' Further back still, in 1670, a collection was made in the parish towards the redemption of captives in Turkish slavery, and the list of the one hundred and seventy-nine people who subscribed can still be seen. But the greatest distress recorded in these accounts was due to William's campaign in Ireland, the dispersal of the Jacobites and the disbanding of the armies after the Battle of the Boyne, 1691–93. A system of passes and begging certificates was devised to deal with the emergency, as is shown by the items that follow: '1692. Paid 3 seamen with a pass allowed by Sir Ralph (Radcliffe), 1s.' (iv); '1691. Paid for relieving a gentleman that came out of Ireland, whose losses sustained there were £7,000,3s.; 1709. Given to a soldier that hadd no leggs and but one arm, 9d.' Through all the period of the wars the local distress can best be measured by the price of bread. In 1728, after some years of peace following the Treaty of Utrecht, the quartern loaf could be bought for 2d. or just under. By 1748 the price had doubled. Then through the Seven Years' War and the struggle with Spain and France the cost of living steadily increased, until in 1801 bread touched the famine price of 20d. the quartern. That was a time when the Hitchin bread charities were appreciated to the full; but even with this alleviation the local distress was acute. The churchwardens were kept busy all the days in doling out relief. '1801. Paid Daniel Joyner for 3 Tabels for the Benny Factions, 10s.' I do not wonder at the joy of the common people when the Sheriff came on May 2, 1802, to proclaim the Peace of Amiens, 'attended by civil officers and a procession of wool-combers dressed in costumes of wool made especially for that occasion' (24).

II

The gleam of the great world, the beacon-lights of English history, catch the wandering eye, even with their faint reflection in a rural church's life. But that rush-light which plays on

iv. In the parish accounts of Medmenham the poor spelling of one of the overseers has produced a pretty piece of humour: '1796, Oct. 9. Relieved a wooman *with a past*, 1s.' These passes were occasionally forged. In 1777 James Dollison, whom the Hitchin overseers had relieved, was convicted of 'having a false protection in his possession' and 'ordered to be delivered to a regulating captain.'

the normal, peaceful ceremonial of the churchwardens is far more illuminating. One pauses, for example, at the items of 'possessioning' (v), sometimes more picturesquely enlarged. This beating of the parish bounds at Rogation-tide, which the word signifies, was extended to two or three days; and the churchwardens on hired nags trotted round the outlying fields, made friends with the farmers, settled any boundary disputes (vi) and fed themselves well at the parish expense. '1760. A ham, 10s.; a piece of beef, 9s.; bread, 3s. 9d.; cheese, 5s.; 20 gallons of mild beer, £1; 9 bottles of wine, 18s.; 2 dozen of bottled beer, 12s.; punch, 1s. 6d.; horse, cart and allowance 2 days, 5s.' The crumbs that fell from the wardens' tables were feast enough for the little mob of younglings who followed in their wake, though they sometimes were specially remembered: 'May 15, 16, 17, 1759. Paid for cakes for the boys going possessioning, 6s.; To beer for the three days, 11s. 6d.' (vii). The boys' remembrance of these occasions was encouraged by the provision of 'points and ribbons and plumes,' and more forcibly still by the customary sport of ducking them in the boundary streams and bumping their heads against the landmark trees. I have talked with a town-worthy, ninety-five years old, who had the liveliest recollections of these 'ramboliations or gang-tides' and of one Rogation when Parson Wiles came with them and read the Gospel of the day under the Gospel trees. If the parson could not perambulate, a guide was procured to see that the possessioners kept, officially at any rate, within the bounds: 'June 4th, 1750. Paid W. Taylor for directing round the bounds of the parish for 2 days, 2s.' He also drank his share of the 44½ gallons of

v. So spelt always in the Hitchin Accounts, and not 'processioning.' I have not seen this application of the word 'possessioning' to Rogation-tide elsewhere, and it is not in the N.E.D. It is, nevertheless, a telling and descriptive word for the taking possession of the parish each year by beating of the bounds.

vi. In a persuasive and Christian fashion, and not as aforetime. Writing of the churches of Graveley and Chisfield, four and five miles away, Chauncy says: 'By reason of the uncertainty of their bounds sad contentions arose between the incumbents that they meeting together upon Perambulation, one Parson killed the other' (8. 124).

vii. This benevolence to little boys is by no means rare. I have found other items which look like the school-treats and choir-outings of our day. One of them is worth noting, perhaps, as a model holiday for hard times. 'May 25th, 1750. To money gave the Boys for going down the river' (the first and last time I have seen the Hiz suggested as a holiday resort) 'and for their provender, 4 cheeses that weighed 42 lbs. at 3¼d. a lb.'

ale supplied for the trip (viii). Possessioning apart, the wardens had one holiday in the year, going to Windsor to collect the rents of some parish property there. As one may imagine, they took their time over it; horseback to London and then very leisurely up and down the river. Sometimes they got another joy-ride to town to hunt for a *locum tenens*, as in '1744, Feb. 22nd. To horse self and expences going to London for a minester, £1 6s. 0d.'

Then there were the Bishop's visitations to attend, generally at Welwyn or Baldock, at rare intervals only at Hitchin, when they produced their accounts and took oath that there were no Recusants, or Papists, in the parish; that the passively resisting Quakers were properly distrained on for church rates; that the minister read the homilies, or preached, if duly licensed, to the best of his ability; that the laity were or were not of good moral life, that the church paths were duly maintained, the Commandments painted in noticeable characters on the walls (ix), and that those who died in the Lord were decently buried in woollen according to the Act. Much more congenial were the vestry meetings, when the whole town seemed to forgather as a family party at the 'Sign of the Cock,' or the 'Red Lion' (where the Exchange now stands) or the 'Sun.' You may be sure at such a rendez-vous the party went off smoothly. The churchwardens saw to that. To start with, they primed the company with beer, or, if the money allowed, with wine. If any awkward questions were raised on the accounts they were promptly drowned. *In vino unanimitas.* It is surprising that some years they had the impudence to produce their accounts for audit; so often it became a matter of a half-pennyworth of charities and church expense to an intolerable deal of drink. There were expostulations now and then by abstemious auditors and strict divines; but tradition—the settled custom of convivial charges—proved too strong. Also there were port-drinking archdeacons in the world those days.

In writing of the official acts of the churchwardens, one should not forget the person through whom so frequently their authority was exercised, to wit the beadle. How one wishes there

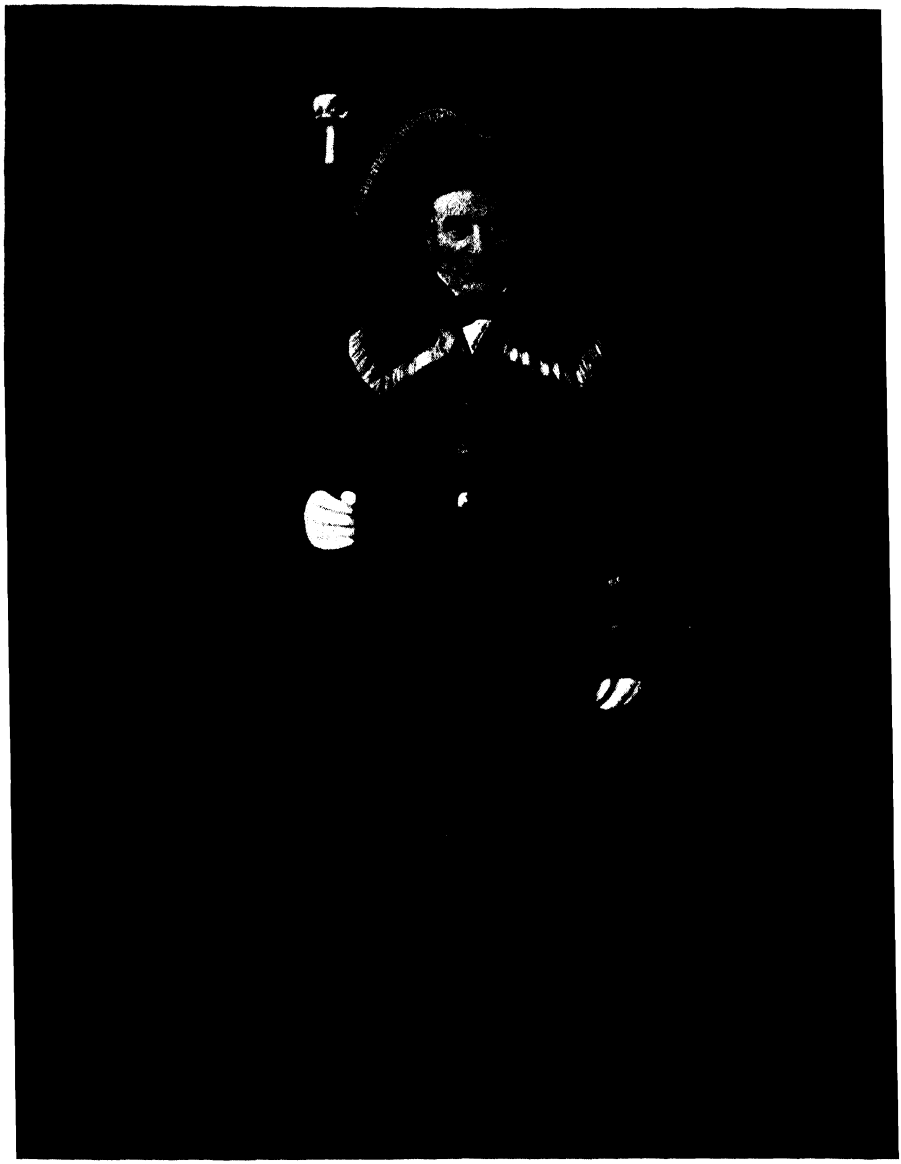
viii. Between 1750 and 1775 the expenditure on this parish luxury went up by leaps and bounds. The amount entered in the May of 1775 'for going round the boundaries' is £12 3s. 6d.—nearly a sixth of the whole disbursements for the year.

ix. '1704, May 27th. Paid James Newman's bill for painting the Commandments, £7 5. 0.'

were a portrait of Henry Gilby, who filled the post so many years at Hitchin in the eighteenth century! The churchwardens knew, of course, that by *his* magnificence they were magnified, and were not niggardly about the cost of his decoration. One traces with growing interest the gradual increase of his splendour. In his predecessor's day a piece of crimson silk of the cost of 4d. was thought enough to attract respect in the market-place. But Gilby was a man of taste. To the crimson silk he first added a hat: '1783. A hat with double gold lace for the beadle, 12s.'; then shoes to the value of 7s.; then a coat at a cost of 10s. These with their frequent renewals contented him for a time. But by 1790 his head had swollen considerably with importance. He demanded and was given a wonderful new head-gear of felt and gold, lace and ribbons at a cost to the parish of £2 5s. 8d. So precious was it that the townsmen felt bound to protect it from the weather, and an 'umbarellowe' was bought from John Moore at a charge of 30s. (x).

In the year 1808, when Gilby retired, the cruel churchwardens took away his clothes. They thought he would be consoled with their dole of half a sovereign. But after so many years the clothes had become the man; and old Gilby died almost in the act of taking them off. The office itself did not long survive him. In the era of reform, when so much was swept away, Sir Robert Peel thought fit to remove the picturesque figure of the beadle from English social life. He wanted something black-coated and more efficient in its place, and created it in the 'peeler.' Yet the passing of the ancient, honourable and harmless office of beadle deserves a sympathetic sigh. It closes a long chapter in our nation's book of life. The last Hitchin beadle to adorn the office was Philip Allen, last but not least of a portly and important race; too corpulent perhaps to be really capable, but none the less admired for his double latitude. His likeness and livery 'in full bloom and pride of beadlehood' can be seen to this day in the first volume of Lawson Thompson's *Collections* (44). There he stands with no vestige about him of coming dissolution, bulging out even the voluminous robes

x. For the 'minister' an umbrella had been bought in 1742. A very early purchase; only seventeen years after the first umbrella had been brought into England. To the end of the century people were still being mobbed for adopting a fashion so foreign. See the chapter, 'The Rise and Fall of the Umbrella,' in *The Cream of Curiosity*, by Reginald L. Hine. (Routledge) 1920.



THE LAST HITCHIN BEADLE, PHILIP ALLEN

and pudding sleeves of a beadle; gorgeous in purple cloth with cape and cuffs of scarlet edged with gold; crowned with a blue-and-gold cocked hat, and flourishing his six-foot staff of office. Beneath T. B. Latchmore's uncoloured portrait (49) these appropriate lines are written :—

> ' " Ah ! well-a-day," their date was fled ;
> His pompous brethren all were dead ;
> And he, neglected and oppress'd,
> Wished to be with them and at rest.
> Old times were changed, old manners gone,
> A " Peeler " filled the Beadle's throne.'

III

A careless eye would very likely miss the modest figure of the clerk behind the beadle's immensity; but those who have studied the picturesque variety of town life in the churchwarden period, ' the age of flunkeyism, plush, vestrydom, beadledom, and lordolatry,' will have met this factotum of the Establishment at every turn. In the company of high churchwardens and other mighty men of the earth obsequiously acquiescent, to those of low estate stentorian and strict, he is everywhere at once, essential, omniscient, in the long line of clerical succession self-possessed (xi). One can see him pretty clearly in the accounts, pottering about, doing the hundred and one mean little jobs a beadle could never bend himself to do. Without him no service is complete. As the *Connoisseur* of 1756 (vol. ii, p. 808) observed : ' The Clerk is not only to tag the prayers with a stave, but he is also the universal father to give away the brides, and the standing godfather to all the new-born bantlings.'

Without him as foster-father no select preacher could be fortified to preach. None but a clerk knew how to measure it out in the vestry, to each one according to his station. ' 1683. Paid for a pint of sack when Mr. Snoodley preached, 1s. 0d.' An archdeacon of that age, like Mr. Hopkinson in 1690, required ' a bottle of rhenish *and* a pint of sack to drink before sermone.' A bishop was a law unto himself, as also were sundry eccentric

xi. It is not always remembered that the clerk's office was held for life, and commonly passed from father to son. The Allen family, for example, were clerks and beadles of Hitchin for one hundred and sixty consecutive years.

divines who to the amazement of the clerk would drink no wine at all: '1720. To Mr. Obadiah Albon 3 bottles of syder before sermone, 1s. od.' '1734. *Item* given a lame minister in lieu of wine, 2s. od.' (401. 13–17). Those men of religious learning, whom Trinity College as patrons sent to preach, being supposed to live more ascetically, were to be refreshed 'with a scholastical and moderate congratulacion but no superfluity or excess,' which in the plain interpretation of the clerk meant 'figs with bread and ale.'

Having seen to it that the preacher was inspired, the clerk's next office was to perambulate the church in sermon time to ensure that he was heard. One smiles at the old descriptions of clerks as 'knock-nobblers and sluggard-wakers,' but evidently there was work enough to do. '1761. Paid for a nobbling stick, 1s.' (xii).

Only a 'church-quake' could have roused the laity from some exhortations of the Rev. Pilkington Morgan, vicar of Hitchin, 1755–88, which I have endured to read. Still, the clerk did his best with them, and with such wakeful, church-chatterers 'as let, vex, disquiet or molest any preacher,' and likewise with those 'yonge, freshe folke,' proverbially so provoking to the powers that be. Nor was it enough to serve as clerical terror to the errors of little boys; there were the dogs as well. It was the clerk's duty to whip these out of the church; and one frequently finds a separate payment to him on that account. A trifling salary for a task not easy to perform, seeing that most of the scuffling and snarling came from the Radcliffe Chapel, and by ancient privilege (rigorously upheld in the days of Emilius Delmé-Radcliffe, friend of George IV) the dogs from the Priory were allowed a special pew and were exempt from the dog-whipper's jurisdiction (401. 18). But the common people with the common dogs could be just as doggedly determined, as one remembers from an early complaint against Rowland Bell, for that 'he will not suffer his dog to be whipped

xii. William Andrews, in one of his innumerable books, *Curiosities of the Church*, 1890, tells of one parish where the sluggard-waker used a long staff, at one end of which was a fox's brush, and at the other a knob. If he caught a woman asleep, he gently tickled her face with the brush, but if a man was found napping he gave him a smart dig in the ribs with the knob. The present verger of St. Mary's, Hitchin, remembers seeing Allen, the beadle, poke the point of his staff into the gaping mouth of a boy who had fallen asleep in the pew behind him.

out of church in tyme of devine service, but kepethe him uppe in his armes and givethe frowarde words.'

Out of church hours as well, there was plenty for the clerk to do. There was the 'puage' or seat rents to collect, which too often occasioned other 'frowarde words' from those who had not been inducted into the fullest dignity of pewdom. There were the arrangements to make for those who wished to be touched for the King's Evil: '1681. *Item* paid Mr. Dawks for bringing of the paper mentioning the time of the Kings Majesties touching for the evill, 2s.' The accounts show that Ann Outlaw was touched in 1683, Edward Radcliffe in 1685, Mary Goldsmith in 1687, Mary and Ann Lucas, the daughters of William Lucas, yeoman, in 1688. And, most bothersome of all, there were the crowds of unfortunates whom the vicar and wardens deputed their subordinate to see; down-at-heel Christians whose faces the clerk grew to know as well as a beggar knows his dish, and multitudes of men exacting money upon pretence of service in the wars. These last had become such a nuisance by 1798 that the archdeacon ordered the rural deaneries to refuse all further relief, 'lest charity minister to idleness and the love of beggery.' If any were given a pittance, it should be those born in the parish whose war records were well known. 'As you do not belong to my parish,' said a clerk to a begging sailor with a wooden leg, 'I cannot relieve you.' 'Sir,' replied the sailor with an heroic air, 'I lost my leg fighting for all the parishes of England.'

IV

We have considered the churchwardens as guardians of public health and public dignity; it is fitting we should now study them in their more ordinary capacity as *custodes fabricæ* or *procuratores ecclesiæ*—their ancient titles as guardians of the ornaments and fabric of the church. Their one idea if anything went wrong with the fabric was to prescribe the infallible specific of whitewash. It was cheap and it covered a multitude of sins. Hardly a year went by without a charge for 'daubeing and whygtyngge the church walls,' and their plasterers put it on with a generous, indiscriminate hand. Nothing escaped, not even the effigies of Baliol and Kendale in the north aisle. When these were restored not many years ago, they were unrecognizable

beneath five coats of plaster. As for cleaning, it was little accounted of in those times. One lights upon stray items for 'airing the writings,' for 'washing the body [i.e. the nave] of the church,' for 'washing the church for Whitsun,' for 'burning tobacco and frankincense' in a time of plague, for 'sprinkling salt against the vermin' (xiii), 'for a sparrow stop-out,' for washing the Kinge's Armes and makeinge them cleane, 1660.' But these are spasmodic charges. The widow Liquorish, who was cleaner in the days of Queen Anne, and who had as many children as Her Majesty (to wit, nineteen), would have smiled at our furious beating of the dust that is bound to return. The only cleaning she and her successors regarded was that 'against the visitation.' It is quite amusing to see in the accounts the sudden purchase of 'long-haired brooms, thrum-mops and besoms' just before the Archdeacon was expected, and the hire of extra help to make things tolerably tidy.

It is, alas! at such times that one meets with those sadly significant items for 'carrying rubbish out of the Church,' e.g. '1764. To 2 men and 2 horses moving rubbish into Church-yard, 10s.' Oh, Cleaning! what crimes have been committed in thy name! What precious and thrice venerable things have gone the way of thy dust-bin! Unhappily, the guardians of the ornaments of St. Mary have passed to their account and are beyond our questioning. But where—one demands of their uneasy spirits—where are those glorious brasses which Chauncy loved to describe; where is the rood-screen with its majestic figures which men came so far to see; where is the carven tomb and figure of Sir John Sturgeon, sometime Lord Mayor of London; where are the arms of Offa, once blazoned on the south-aisle roof; where is the third step of the font which that vandal-vicar Morgan dared to remove; where is the brass candle-branch which the piety of Robert Lucas provided; where are those banners of the Hitchin gilds which the nimble fingers of ladies long since dust embroidered; where are the warriors and saints, most gloriously wrought in medieval glass, which even Cromwell's soldiers spared? The echo comes in the refrain of old Villon's ballad, '*Où sont les neiges d'antan?*' And 'where are the snows of yester-year?'

xiii. In the Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Margaret's, Westminster, there is this item: '1610. To Goodwyfe Wells for salt to destroy the fleas in the churchwarden's pew, VId.'

After all, one must not be too hard on these eighteenth-century wardens. Their *métier* was to serve as Martha in the house of Mary, often a thankless and always an unprofitable office; and like Martha, that worthy maid-of-all-work, they did what they could. Cumbered as they were about much serving (for someone must do these things) they could not be bothered to look after the ornaments as well. Who shall blame them if some things got astray? I, who have pored so long over their accounts, would be the last to cast a stone, for remembering the age I am constantly lost in wonderment at the hours they spared from the tavern for the glory of God and the good of His people. Their 'disburstments' speak eloquently of the multiplicity and frequency of their affairs; and what a delightful medley they make!

To begin with, there is the common round of payments pre-ordained, e.g. for the monthly communion wine, Sack, Madeira, Muscadine or Tent, at five or six shillings the month; for the half-yearly supply of rushes to strew upon the floor; for oil in the lamps, and dips and tallows for the sconces; for 'fewelling,' for 'greese for the belles,' for glazing windows, 'washing the shurplasses at Crismas,' transcribing registers, repairing service books, training the 'child singers,' tuning the organ, 'weeding and rowling the walkes' and so forth. But this routine work was nothing to the casual charges they had to meet. One day it would be 'two yards of fustian for bottoming the pulpit cushion,' another day '2s. for painting the font,' another day 4d. 'for an almanack for Mr. Hildesley's room in the church, (xiv); another day 9d. 'for makeinge the clock to goe'; another day 3s. 'for putting right the chimes,' which had been made by Francis Berry, the Hitchin clockmaker in 1692; another day 5s. 'for cleaning the river' running through the churchyard; another day 'for Greens to stick the Chancell for Xmas, 2s. 6d.'; another day 'for riddeigne the gutters in the great snowe, 6s. 3d.'; another day 'for a horse stone at the church gate, 5s.'; another day 'for strings for the Bass Violin, 2s. 8d.'; for '1 lb. of candles for singers, 11d.'; and 'a quart of suett [i.e. sweet] wine to the orgyn makyr for his laber, 5d.'; another day, 1762, 'expenses going to St. Neots to see the bells weighed, 15s.'; another day some new seats for the choir, for the putting up of which

xiv. He tutored boys going up to Cambridge and used the room above the south porch for the purpose.

they paid in quarts of beer (xv); another day, a search for a sober, strong-headed man to climb the steeple, remove and regild the weathercock and set it up again. Then a sundial was bespoken to stand amidst the graves so that Christian folk might moralize how time as well as mankind passed away. And 'a quarter of an hour glass' was fitted to the pulpit as a gentle hint to Vicar Morgan, who was what they termed in those days 'a painful preacher.'

Still more time was taken up by the fussing of the Archdeacon, who wanted to know *inter alia* what had become of the *Paraphrases* of Erasmus and Jewel's *Apology for the Church of England*, which by order of Edward VI and Elizabeth had to be kept in some convenient place for the illumination of the faithful. The wardens hunted high and low, but the precious Jewel could not be found for the simple reason that it had been wrongfully included in the sale of Parson Kidner's library in 1677 (xvi). The *magnum opus* of Erasmus was at last discovered in the coal-hole, where its pages were slowly serving for the illumination of the stove. Dead authors like Erasmus had to take their chance, but the wardens gave a watchful heed to the living, and in particular to the patrons and pew-holders of the church. *Their* comfort was carefully studied: '1710. To a needle-work cushion for Lady Radcliffe, 3s.: 1755. To a bolt for Mrs. Hildesley's pue, 4d. (xvii): 1763. For enlarginge the seate where Mrs. Warner sitteth, 2s.: 1763. For 3 dosen of hassack, 1 16s. 0d.' (2. 46–8).

All these good things had to be paid for somehow, and that again was an ever-pressing problem for the clerk. Long since departed were the easy going days when the sons and daughters of Holy Church 'drew themselves together' to pay for what was needed, when the pious as a matter of course gave of their substance 'to the glory of God, the ornament of the Church,

xv. But no liquor is expended on the choir itself. They did these things better elsewhere. In the Churchwardens' Accounts of the parish of Toddington near by, you may find plenty of entries of 'Ale for the Psalm Singers.'

xvi. The second sale of books by auction in England. The priced catalogue is in the British Museum. In the same sale the Church of St. Mary also lost its copy of *The Assemblies Directory for the Publick Worship of God in England, Scotland and Ireland, with an Ordinance of Parliament to take away the Common Prayer Book*, 1644 (376).

xvii. Occasioned by a complaint of this lady that some one of 'the common or middling sort had dared to *usurp* her seat.'

and the exemplary encouragement of others.' Now it was all churlish cupidity, compulsion and Church rates. So much more heavy labour for the clerk. As like as not the wardens would prove illiterate, but he was supposed to be instructed in the mystery of figures and to be handy with his pen. Also he was a permanent official—wardens come and wardens go, the clerk goes on for ever. Most of the unpleasant jobs came back to him in the end. So one finds him sitting amongst the chief townsmen whilst they discussed estimates and growled at the enormity of bills. It is generally he who suggests those ' deductions for exhorbitant charges ' so frequent in the accounts, and has accordingly to bear the brunt of the creditor's displeasure. It was to him also the wardens went for fair copies of the Church rate, by no means easy to make, for the drafts were indescribable. Nor is that to be wondered at, for, what with the Quakers and the Independents and other malcontents, the making of the rate must have taxed their brains to the full—and their discretion, too, for though the first named were harmless enough, and went like lambs to the sale of their own goods, the rest behaved like Boanerges and made the wardens' lives a very burden. Especially John Geard, the redoubtable pastor of Tilehouse Street, who had a provoking habit of calling public meetings on the eve of the vestry and of placarding the town with bills denouncing the iniquity and illegality of Church rates. One smiles to see against his name in subsequent rates the direction, ' not to be taxed.'

V

Another source of trouble was the churchyard, which until 1827 was open to the world. No one seemed to care very much about the desecration that went on. From time to time the wardens used to put up notices forbidding fowls and pigs to come there, and occasionally a few lads were thrashed for playing leap-frog over the stones, or fined for smashing windows: ' 1749. Warrant for the boys about church windows, 1s. 6d.' But otherwise they looked on God's Acre as a profitable holding. They took a toll per score for sheep depastured there, a penny now and again from the housewives whose linen hung on lines between the trees, and a considerable rent from the hucksters, higglers and herbalists who set up stalls of a Tuesday along the

outer path. Also, if times were bad, they were not above selling a few of the older gravestones to reduce their deficit. The north-east side of the graveyard (which Mark Hildesley had added) was formerly an orchard, and the beadle spent most Septembers fighting little boys for the forbidden fruit. Nor were the other trees neglected. Items are frequently entered for planting elms and limes, for 'scouring the branches,' and for felling and cutting timber to use for galleries and pews.

Further trouble ensued from the wrangling of wardens and overseers concerning a number of charges that were part civil and part ecclesiastical. For example, the wardens were forced by the slackness or scruples of the overseers to pay for the whipping house in the market, for the putting up of the ducking-stool for the correction of unquiet women or women scolds, and for strengthening the stocks. One would think that the overseers should have been responsible for these instruments of torture, but they were used for spiritual and moral offences, too. There is a whimsical instruction still extant to the beadle of a neighbouring village in 1749 'to pump cold water on Martha Spriggins whensoever she appears upon the King's Highway in order that her pride may be abated.' Once again, there were cases of relief more of pity than of right, against which the overseers hardened their never very tender hearts and pulled ever more tightly the strings of the parish purse. At such times the churchwardens intervened to temper the soullessness of the Law with the clemency of the Church. The accounts preserve some quaint entries on this score: '1692. Paid for wool for the burying of two children borne at the docke, 1s.'; '1709. To 2 poor seamen castaways, 2s.'; '1714. Paid for the fish man as died at the Folly, 3s.'

Apart from these private alms the wardens collected the gifts of the congregation on the 'briefs' that were circulated by authority for the relief of those who had suffered loss by sea, by fire or by 'the sending of God.' This meant a lot of trouble ill rewarded, for there was too much misery in every parish for men to be moved by miseries outside. A village near by, or even the county, might expect something. '1681. Towards the repayre of St. Albans steeple, 2s. 7d.' But for a distant cause: '1716. For the Prodestons of Bohemia, Poland, Polish-Russia, and Transilvania,' the whole parish would only muster five shillings. 'To redeem captives in machines in

Morocco,' the township of Hitchin offered one shilling and tenpence; and 'for the Oyster Dredgers in the County of Kent' the sum of twopence. It was ordered in 1677 that 'the preamble to every brief be pathetically penned, so as to move the people to liberality upon so pious and charitable a work.' But the majority of the congregation evidently agreed with Pepys, who as early as 1661 had entered in his diary: 'to Church where we observe the trade of briefs is come up to so constant a course every Sunday that we resolve to give no more to them.' The town itself once profited by a brief, 1660, 'in aid of the poor men of Hitchin,' but from that time forward it was always paying out unwilling and ever decreasing trifles until this public system of begging was abolished in 1828.

Another cause of quarrel between the wardens and overseers was the storing of the arms, ammunition and accoutrement of the local militia. From the beginning of history, as the overseers maintained, these had been kept within the churches. It was so in mediæval times, when Hitchin men mustered in the Churchyard for the wars with France, heard a soldiers' Mass in St. Mary's Chapel, and took down their armour from the walls; it was so in Queen Bess's day, for, as the Armada sailed, a dispatch went to Secretary Cecil from here, showing what weapons the Church possessed; it was so in the Civil War, when Lord Essex equipped his 3,000 yokels to repel Prince Rupert's attack. The wardens of the eighteenth century thought it time these secular associations should cease. But the logic of the Establishment was too hard for them. After all, they were the King's servants, and he was the defender of their faith. The history of the Church Militant was scarcely such as would justify a conscientious objection. So they surrendered to the Militia and got fairly even with them later by burying their irreligious regimentals in the crypt, or the 'skull-house,' as it was then pleasantly called. '1759. To two wainscot chests for the Militia with a large draw in each and for placing them below the Chancel, £5 5s. od.'

A similar intrusion of the laity can be traced in the matter of the bells. With the ceremonial use of these I have dealt already; but even in normal times the long arm of the people too often pulled the ropes. The bells which were hung to the glory of God served rather for the glorification of His people, especially for those who had contributed to their

cost. As one of them declares in the detestable motto about its rim :—

> 'At proper times my voice I'll raise,
> And sound to my subscribers' praise.'

So when Hale won his seat at the county election the ringers, rung up with ale and decorated with blue ribbon, jangled the bells to let the 'Whig dogs' know (85); so again did they in 1832 for another magnate who treated them well: '22 Dec. 1832. Lord Grimston for the election and eating and drinking, £4 4s.'; with which one may compare this caustic note of the other candidate, who treated them ill; 'and received of Mr. Alston, *no* eating and *no* drinking, £1.' So again in 1838, 'ringing for Wm. Wilshere M.P.'—a stormy election which necessitated a further item of 'Paid for broken windows, 6s.' (205). On such election days the bells rang out furiously and to some tune, but they could be made to peal pleasantly enough, if not so profitably, at other times. Indeed, those who made them contracted that they should be 'concordant, greable and tunable in sound and musyke.' The same Wilshere gave £5 'for ringing for his cows,' and Squire Emilius Delmé-Radcliffe, the friend and stable-adviser of George IV, gave them three guineas for a rouse as he rode home to the Priory after winning the Point-to-Point. This good man whilst he lived also revived the dish of calf's-head, given as a customary reward to ringers on Corpus Christi day, and was rung out of this world, as was meet and right, with a notable peal of farewell (252. 67).

Some of the secular uses, it is true, were innocent enough; for the bells played an active part in the work a day life of the town. From Monday to Saturday the tenor bell rang at 4 a.m. (the 'malt-maker's bell' (xviii) it was called), and for curfew at eight in the evening. Early and late of a Tuesday, the market bell was heard—rung by the beadle and paid for under protest by the Church. In all times of fire, pestilence and peril the

xviii. Professor Hamilton Thompson writes: 'I think that this term is an obvious corruption of "morrowmass bell." The morrow-mass or day-bell was the regular summons to the first mass of the morning, and we hear a good deal about it in towns on main roads, where the mass "*post pulsationem campane que vocatur le daybell*," as at Grantham and Newark, was celebrated especially for the benefit of merchants setting out on journeys, and was sometimes called *missa pro itinerantibus*.' As already noted in the chapter on 'The Church,' *supra*, p. 93, there was a special morrow-mass altar provided at St. Mary's.

great bell boomed with its ominous note. The sixth bell summoned townsmen to the vestry, served as the gleaners' bell (9 a.m. and 6 p.m. after harvest), and on Shrove Tuesday as pancake bell. One of our bells, in a worthier motto, recalls these multiform duties: 'I praise the true God. I summon the common people. I assemble the clergy. I lament the dead. I drive out pestilence. I celebrate the feasts.'

The sacred uses were much as they are now, save that the great bell (28 cwt.), which now tolls for the dead, then tolled for the dying, just as the soul was passing forth upon its final journey. Long after the Reformation, it still went by the lovely medieval name of the forth-fare bell, and served the threefold purpose of warding off devils, of calling the priest to perform the last offices of the Church, and of appealing for the intercession of the faithful.

VI

The bell that 'summoned the common people' rang clearly enough through the confines of Sleepy Hollow, but could not lift its voice over the hills to the 'hambletts' of Preston and Langley. Nor, though the wind lay that way, were the 'hamblettors' disposed to hear. In the course of centuries their isolation had bred a certain independence of temper, not unknown to country-folk, which drew them gradually to cut adrift from their mother-church. So when, shortly after the Restoration, St. Mary's wardens bethought themselves to restore their own building, and called upon the hamlets to help them pay for it, they were rudely repulsed. 'Tyme out of mind,' they were told, 'have we been free and exempt from all repairs of the church at Hitchin, and were never yet rated in respect thereof.' The 'hamblettors,' indeed, had as much as they could manage to keep the roof of Minsden Chapel over their own heads; in fact more, for just at that time their own wardens had made off with moneys voluntarily subscribed to that end. Having to start afresh, they had not a penny-piece to spare for Hitchin—nor would they sink so low as to ask relief in their turn. The wardens of St. Mary, too proud to argue the point, consulted Tristram, their lawyer. He, being well fortified beforehand ('1686. Paid for 2 bottles of wine for the Attorneye'), gave a bellicose opinion, and straightway commenced twenty-four actions against the chief inhabitants of Preston and Langley.

Sir Edwin Sadleir, of Temple Dinsley, was wisely left alone, for as a Middle Temple man he knew a thing or two about the law, and as a holder of Temple lands was by ancient custom immune from ecclesiastical dues. In the Court of the Archdeacon of Huntingdon, where the cases were first heard, the four-and-twenty elders of the hamlets were 'adjudged to be in error and contumacious in conduct,' and were ordered to pay the rate for the repair of Hitchin Church. This they flatly declined to do, and, though the Bishop of Lincoln intervened to stay all proceedings until he could be better informed, 'the parishioners of Hitchin, in contempt of his lordship's order, procured two of the twenty-four to be excommunicated, signified, taken up and cast into prison'! After a strong petition to the Lords Commissioners, a further hearing was allowed at St. Albans, but 'Sir Ralph Radcliffe being present,' as the wardens naïvely record, he was able to influence a favourable decision. The victory was celebrated on the spot. 'Paid for brandy, 10d. Paid at the Lyon, St. Albans, 6/8. Paid more there, 3/8.' Finally, the 'hamblettors' appealed to Cæsar, i.e. to the Lords Commissioners for Ecclesiastical Causes sitting at Doctors' Commons. But they had not measured the craft or the pocket of their opponents; for, not placing all their trust in a country attorney, the Hitchin wardens sought out a sharp counsellor in London, well versed in the tricks of the trade, and with an appropriate name: 'Paid Mr. Fox his bill, £2 7s.' For as little as £3 4s. 6d. he hired the services of the Attorney-General and that exquisite pleader Sir Thomas Pinfold, whose tongue had triumphed in a thousand causes. Against such an array how should the poor, simple folk of Preston succeed? The learned judge 'pronounced and declared that George Barnadiston, Master of Arts and Commissary to the Archdeacon of Huntingdon, did give a just sentence on behalf of the said Church of Hitchin,' and ordered the appellants under pain of the law and contempt thereof to pay the whole charges of the suit. So they went home—or rather to the prison—sadder and wiser men. The wardens remained to drink. 'Paid the Commissioner's fees and for wine at the sentence given, £1 8s. 0d.'

The only other serious litigation referred to in the accounts was in 1719, and was again occasioned by the boldness of St. Mary's wardens, this time in a better cause. It seems that

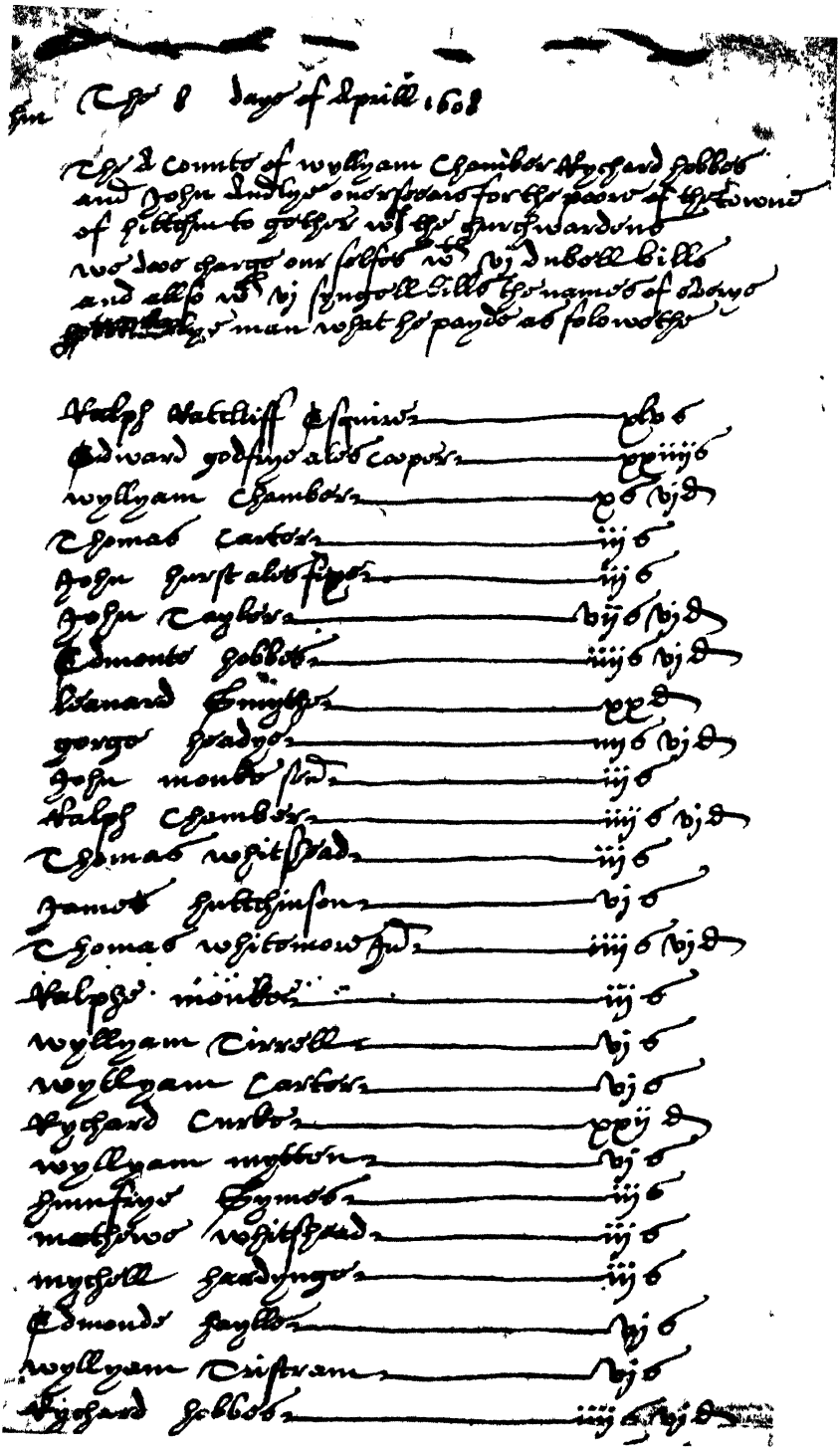
the two squires, Benedict Ithell, of Temple Dinsley, and Ralph Radcliffe, of the Priory, had so far exalted themselves as to drive on Sundays in their gilded coaches (' emblazoned with arms, and their crests glittering in silver radiance from every part of the harness where a crest could possibly be placed ') on through the south gates and along the gravelled path of the graveyard right up to the porch itself; as if they did honour to Almighty God by their stately condescension. The ringers used to keep on till they saw the splendid pageant ' brought up in style, with straining and struggling of horses, cracking of whip, glistening of harness, and flashing of wheels through gravel, horses fretted into a foam, dashing the pebbles amongst the poor pedestrian people ' (xix). This flaunting parade of petty lordlings in consecrated ground so incensed the spirit of Richard Witherby that, without consulting the vicar or his brother wardens, he went out on Saturday night, November 9, 1734, drove a great beam into the middle of the gravelled way, and girdled three chains and padlocks round the entrance gates. Early on Sunday morning the news of this impudent act was carried to Squire Radcliffe, who sent his carpenter to break through the chains and saw down the offending beam, which was done just in time for Squire Benedict to drive triumphantly through. On the Monday morning Witherby, still more incensed, presented ' by common fame ' against Radcliffe's carpenter for malicious damage, and against Ithell's coachman for trespass, and summoned them both before the court. Once again, however, the law proved the rich man's advocate, and the complaint was dismissed on the delightful ground that no apparent annoyance had been done to the corpses to whom, in absence of any claim by the vicar (who dared not open his mouth even to save his warden), the graveyard was held to belong (195).

* * * * *

There is a vast deal more one would like to recover from the oblivion of these old accounts. But these few pages must suffice to portray the lay side of church life at St. Mary's a couple of centuries ago, and those very human and fallible mortals who in their wilful, whimsical way shuffled through such business as their office required them to do. After all, one rises from the

xix. I have borrowed the contemporary and first-hand description of Washington Irving in his *Country Church.*

perusal of these dusty tomes with a large tolerance, if not affection, for these simple-minded guardians of the Church who performed according to their lights a task that was never easy to do. I have said that their *métier* was to serve as Martha in the house of Mary, but I do not think many of them loved their office for officiousness' sake. They were in danger perhaps of mistaking churchianity for Christianity ; but their daily and voluntary ministration seems to have been the expression of a natural piety—the unaffected goodness of men whose hearts had also kindled at the vision of Mary, but to whom, as to so many, service rather than contemplation seemed the more essential way of life. ' Therefore,' as one may reverently hope, ' are they before the Throne of God and serve Him day and night in His Heavenly temple.'



THE FIRST HITCHIN OVERSEERS' ACCOUNT, 1608

THE POOR (i)

I

OF those who in the first days of the Poor Law were 'mercyable and good to wretches that bee nedy' the record is woefully insufficient. Before the statutes of 39 Eliz. c. 3, 1597 and 43 Eliz. c. 2, 1601, which created the office of overseer, there were schemes and statutes one after another to cope with a problem that had become more than ever acute. As far back as 1566 the Hitchin wardens had purchased 'a paper book of a Quier for the accompte of the proctors of the poore' (7. 6). There are picturesque appointments in later years of 'Surveyors of Strangers' and 'Beadles of the Beggars.' There is the commission under the brutal statute of 1572, to make 'diligent enquiries of all aged, poore, impotent and decayed persons.' But the earliest document of any detail that survives is the account rendered in 1608 by 'Wyllam Chambers, Rychard Hobbes and John Audlye as overseers of the poore of the towne of Hitchin' (403). This leads off with three folio pages of 'Sessment' upon 138 of the more substantial inhabitants, ranged in rough order of propertied importance. Ralph Radcliffe, who heads the list, pays XLVs. Edward Docwra, of the Brotherhood House, grandson of the last Prior of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, contributes XXIIIs. In descending degrees can be traced the names of many other goodly townsmen: Thomas Chapman, brother of the poet; Adam Tristram, known as 'the craftie physition'; Richard Lucas, of Westmill; the honoured families of Papworth, Pulter, Laundey and Draper, all are there. Even the modest Edmond Farthyng is squeezed in to make up the grand total of £49 8s. 8d. The Vicar, John Huddlestone, who had not been near the parish for three years, appears to have escaped assessment. The last two sheets of this document make it plain that it was in outdoor relief, on the scale of 6d. a week, that

i. This chapter has been enriched by the revision of it in manuscript by the Right Hon. Sidney and Mrs. Beatrice Webb, whose *English Poor Law History*, Part I, 'The Old Poor Law,' 1927, is the standard work on the subject.

most of the money was spent. 'Payd to Mother Miller for her keepynge LII weeks XXVIs.' Some, like 'Father Warren of Walsoe,' are paid only 'at sondrye tymes.' One Margery Gannox is given 1d. a week 'for her keepynge of a base [i.e. illegitimate] child.' There are items of clothing also: for 'makynge of ii smockes IIIId.': 'for mendyng of Fosters shoone Vd.': 'for a payre of hose VIId.' Bodies have to be mended, too, and Tristram as parish apothecary is recompensed for 'settynge Sundaye's wife her shoulder,' and 'mendynge Jaylle his wife.' Of the town boys one is apprenticed 'at the charges, to wit 40s., of Ralph Radcliffe,' whilst another is partly 'set forth' by the overseers: 'Given to Halass towards the aparollyng of his boy that went to London to be prenticed iis. vid.' So the money goes until at the end, after much agony of addition and subtraction, and after the auditor has been surcharged for insinuating into the account a well-deserved 'refresher' for himself, there remain only a few poor coins to place in the iron chest of St. Mary's against the ensuing year: '*deductis deducendis*, there resteth clere to the overseers the sum of 6s. 1d.' (403).

That is the kind of account on tattered, beer-stained scraps of paper which the overseers were submitting to the justices for the next seventy years. Even so, they reveal something of the duties and difficulties of these new officials, and the gradual awakening of the parish conscience towards its sick and poor. Left to themselves, it is likely that these parish officers would have shirked their duty, for it was unfamiliar and it was unpaid. But they were as constantly admonished and directed by the magistrates as the magistrates in their turn were admonished and directed by the Privy Council. Never perhaps in English history was there such co-ordination of central and local authority as in the reign of James I. The machine of government, not as yet clogged with the complexity of modern affairs, worked smoothly and swiftly. The eyes of the King's Council were over all the land. Not one poor man could fall to the ground without Robert Cecil's knowledge. At a time when plague and famine were so rife, it was fortunate, indeed, for England that those in high places were so able and unsleeping. It is not in the early overseers' accounts, therefore, but in the returns of the justices that one learns how they coped with the problems of that day. In order that the King's 'pittiful and charitable minde' might not be disturbed by the complaints of his subjects

whilst he amused himself at his hunting-box at Royston 1623, it was ordered that Hitchin market should be supplied from the opposite quarter of Bedfordshire, and that the townsmen should sell to the poor of Hitchin at half-price. 'Barley being the poor man's bread corne,' proceeds the justices' report, 'we have restrained the making of malt. Wheat is 8s. 6d. a bushell' (Cal. S.P.D. 1619–23, p. 540).

Again in 1636 one finds the Hitchin justices conferring with the overseers over 'the application of three poore tradesmen who were shutt up [i.e. in the plague] and have lost their custome and spent their meanes, and have now petitioned for stock to put them into trade againe' (404. *b*). It is on the eve of the Civil War, however, 1638, that one meets with the most grievous instances of destitution, and the beginnings of those disorders which were, in the end, to overwhelm the beneficent schemes of the local justices: 'The necessityes of labouring men and of poore people by reason of the dearthe of corn and want of worke is so extreame in the market town of Hitchin that many have pawned and sold their goods, and many of them do not only break hedges and spoile woods and wander abroad for reliefe, but also they steale sheepe in the night and garbage them in the fieldes and lyve upon the fleshe, and pilfer for provision of vituals. We have endeavoured to constrayne the richer sorte to sett a certain number of poore to worke according to their several abilities, but they are full of complaints and excuses' (404. *g*).

II

In 1688 it was resolved to keep more elaborate books of record, and from that time forward the student is able to oversee the overseers in every detail of their daily round. By that year there was a 'town house' in being at the bottom of Tylers Street. They did well to be proud of it and to insure it as soon as they could, 1722, at a premium of 13s. (ii). Previously, if the overseers wished to house their 'sturdy beggars' or set them to useful tasks, they had to borrow the Free School barn. As far

ii. In this chapter it is considered a sufficient reference to give the year of each item quoted from the eleven volumes of Overseers' Assessments and Accounts described in the Bibliography (407). The disbursements for the year never occupy more than a page or two and are quite easy to find. The Epitome and Index (234) can be consulted if necessary; many of the charges quoted in this chapter are there set out in full. Where any item has its source elsewhere than in the Overseers' Accounts the reference is given.

back as 1618 an arrangement had been made with one Stephen Langley to come over from St. Albans once a week and teach the poor how to manufacture 'curious woolwork and excellent yarns' (402. 6). To the same barn in 1630 came Jeremiah Hockley from Ware to expound the 'mystery of flax dressing, the spinning of linen threads and the making of straw hats' (402. 7); and a 'knitting schooldame' was provided in the following year. Hitchin, too, was one of the eight towns in the county where the experiment was tried of employing the artisans out of work in the making of serges and baize, then called 'the new drapery.' In the new 'town house,' or 'house of maintenance,' these useful trades were continued and some others introduced. Spinning is not mentioned in the accounts until 1709: 'Paid James Hurst for mending Widow Bodfish's wheel, 1s. 2d.'; and it was not until the year 1761 that a spinning school was established, with twenty-eight wheels that cost 3s. 4d. each. The first mistress of the school was Sarah Samm, and her fine-spun salary amounted to three shillings a week. The same amount was paid to Francis Ansell's wife for 'larning the platters.' Those poor creatures who could neither spin nor plat were set to make 'boddices and stomachers,' to be sold later in the market for 2s. 9d.; or 'sewin badges' of red or blue cloth on 'the shoulder of the right sleeve of the uppermost garment' of those 'impotent and poor,' as distinguished from 'sturdy and disorderly' beggars, who had been licensed by the justices to go forth and beg (iii).

Men, it was found, were not good for much; but some could be trained to make shoes, the sort of shoes that then fetched 24s. the dozen. Those who could be taught nothing were compelled to beat hemp: '1695. A block to knocke hempe upon, 5s.'; or else handed over to the surveyor of the highways to break stones. On the other hand, if paupers were caught young, it would appear that something might be made of them. One is glad to observe a laudable keenness in the overseers for 'teaching the rudiments': '1749. Paid John Lyle for six weeks' schooling of John Wright, 3s.' '1751. Paid for a horn book and primmer to the workhouse, 3d.' '1760. Paid for Jabez

iii. These badges, imposed for the first time in 1697, were greatly abhorred. In the accounts many an item of relief has to be struck out and this note appended: 'Refused to wear the said badge, and have pulled the same off their garments in contempt of the said order.'

Wixen to further him to learninge at the schools and for a *Lux Grammatica*, 6s.' These are frequent charges, and they are accompanied with occasional bribes to the poor aspirant after knowledge, *douceurs* most delicately applied: '1727. To Little Mary Incouragement, 6d.' Moreover, to those who would learn there was a fair chance of getting out into the world. Any likely lad, soon or late, would get prenticed 'to the arte or trade of husbandrie,' or to 'the skill and mistery of a black smith,' or in the last resort be 'turned over to the sea-service.' Any sensible girl would be offered a home somewhere, 'to learn all partes and sortes of good housewifrie and spinstering'; or else, under the instructions issued to the overseers, 'be sett to spinning and such small worke as is most meete for them according to the tendernesse of their age, that idlenesse may not fasten upon them.' In 1619 the Hitchin magistrates feel bound to admit that 'the poore are hardlye provided for, and masters are wanting, all persons of abilitie having apprentices already settled upon them.' But by the year 1633 they are able to report: 'Wee have procured eleaven of the poorest children and orphans in Hitchin to be bound apprentices over and above the nomber of fortye children bound about two years since.' Three years later the number had increased to eighty-four (404. *a* & *b*).

Reading the earlier deeds of apprenticeship, and the frequent informations against masters 'of unreasonably abusing and beating,' one is inclined at first to pity the poor apprentice; but, after all, a town-child, 'one bred of alms and fostered with cold dishes' (*Cymbeline*, 2. 3), could hardly have expected much. So long as the indentures secured him 'sufficient, wholesome and competent meat, drink, lodging, washing and apparel' (iv), and the teaching of his trade, he made no fuss about the covenants of conduct: 'His said master faithfully shall serve' (so the parchments run), 'his secrets keep, his lawful commandments everywhere gladly do. . . . He shall not commit Fornication nor contract Matrimony, nor play at cards, Dice, Tables, or any unlawful games; he shall not haunt taverns or playhouses, nor absent himself from his master's service day nor night: But in all things as a faithful apprentice he shall behave himself

iv. E.g. 1688, the overseers supply to John Pumkin, 'a poore childe,' 2 paire of stockinge, 2 paire of shoes, 2 shirte, a fustian frocke, a coate, a paire of breeches and a hatt.' To Boney Hubbard they supply only 'a feare-nothing jacket,' i.e. one made entirely of leather.

towards his master and all his ' (405). These are stipulations in restraint of youth, but in practice much was winked at that the deed would disallow, until at last the form itself was tempered, ' because,' said some strait-laced overseers, ' through foolish pity it is rendered of non-effect.'

Everything, of course, depended on the master, and in Hitchin there seemed to prevail a disposition to do well by the ' poorlings ' or ' town-children.' At Stevenage, not five miles away, parish children, ripe for apprenticeship, were numbered ; and the masters then drew lots to decide which each of them should take—a shameful custom, of which the results are frequently reflected in our Hitchin accounts, e.g. ' 1761. Spent at Preston when Peter Malins of Stevenage came to find his prentice who had run away from him.' There was none of that inhumanity at Hitchin. At the annual binding on Binding-Tuesday, the second Tuesday after Easter, the masters were carefully selected in St. Mary's Church, and security was required of them ' to keep the prentice like a Christian.' From the tower of the same church, at the end of the long apprenticehood of seven, ten or twelve years, the tenor bell was sometimes rung to proclaim that a boy belonging to the town was out of his ' binding-tyme.'

III

And what of those who were apprenticed only to poverty, who eked out their days in the ' house of maintenance ' ? How did they fare ? Not so badly, if we may judge from the accounts. Perhaps the poet Dyer deserved to be called a ' drivelling hypocrite ' for extolling the workhouses as ' houses of kind restraint.' Still, life was not altogether unbearable ; as most of the ' porpors ' knew, it was far worse outside in the Bridewell or House of Correction. After all, there was meat at 3d. per lb. on three days in the week ; there was also suet-pudding—a standard dish unto this day—which was made in a conical tin and cut off into sections. One market day a dissatisfied inmate took his portion into the town, fixed it to a stick, and trundled it round and round the Market Place. But epicures like him were not left to starve ; for oatmeal and butter and bread and cheese were served every day. On Sundays there was small beer after the sermon, and on high days and holidays wine was served at the cost to the overseers of one shilling the pint. ' 1704. Paid for Beere on

Thanksgiveng day (March 4th), 5s.': '1714. Paid for sack to the paupers on the King's accession, 9s.' On the other hand, if one can trust the occasional inventories, the furnishings were few and far between; the 'cloths on the backs of each inmate of the house' were little better than rags; there was, in 1744, but one comb [spelt 'coame' in the inventory] for all the paupers and a shameful scarcity of soap (414. 2). One wonders how Frank Saunders, the then master or 'looker-over' of the poor, was able to fulfil his *Duties with respect to workhouse*, 'to keep them Clean and Decent and to Do Well by them, and to keep them to church every Sabbath Day (v) and himself sit with the paupers and keep the children quiet and attentive' (414. 3). Some of the Masters, it is true, lightened the yoke for themselves and the paupers as far as possible. There were days off for the well-behaved: e.g. '1741 (Sept. 19th). To the children at the workhouse for fairage at Baldock fair, 3s.' '1744. To pockitt money for the Boys, 1s.' There were also days off for the misbehaved, who without leave had 'gone to St. Alban's races, where they said they could earn more money than off the parish by holding gentlemen's horses' (414. 5). There were nights off occasionally for those who were light-heeled and light-hearted enough to dance. '1736. Paid for a violin for John Crout, 6s.' There were cards for those old cronies who could not dance: '1748. Paid for a pair of second-hand cards, 1s.' Here again all depended on the masters. Many were easy enough, especially the earlier ones, who were too incompetent to be anything else. One may tell the sort of task-master the overseers were accustomed to in the early Georgian days from a petition addressed to Ralph Radcliffe in 1729 by Richard Tristram, Daniel Warner, John Draper, George Lyle, William Lucas and others (409): 'The place of Keeper of the House of Correction being vacant on the death of William Sheppard, and Sir Henry Penrice of Offley being very strenuous for Thomas Elmer of Offley who has a very large family of children, which in all likelyhood must after his decease become burthensome to their parish,

v. One remembers Shelley's cynical comment, 'That they may there thank the Creator for His mercy towards them.' To induce the paupers to be still more content with that station of life into which God had been pleased to call them, certain books of religious consolation were provided at the Workhouse; but from the continuing excellence of their condition it is to be feared they were little read. '1761. Inventory of room 12. A candle-box, a comb-case, and some old books, *the Bibles good*' (414. 6).

and we having several in our parish who are very fit for that office; therefore we whose names are hereunder sett humbly desire you'l be so good as not only to stand by us yourself in choosing one of our own towne to officiate in that office, but also to intercede with Mr. Ithell and Mr. Bigg for that purpose, in doing which you will infinitely oblige your very humble servants.' This magisterial habit of setting the poor to lead the poor in order to save one more on the parish was, as the petitioners maintained, an 'ill president to create and of very ill consequence.' But it took thirteen years in Hitchin before any proper appointments were made. In spite of every opposition, including that of his fellow-overseers, Thomas Rowley, 1742, resolved to adopt the new system of trained officials who contracted to supply whatever was needful for the paupers at so much a head. Again the petitioners arose. 'Whereas Thos. Rowley, overseer of our parish, hath against and contrary to two legal vestry orders Lett and Bargained with Thomas Freeston to farme the Workhouse of our parish, we do apprehend this way of proceeding is striking at the very foundation of parish proceedings and is looked upon by us as very illegal and unjust. To vindicate these illegalities, the aforesaid officer this day (March 29th) did at a publick vestry, held at our parish church, bid defiance to the parish, which is conceived by us to be a considerable addition to our grievances; therefore we desire you will grant some redress to prevent the like insults for the future' (410). 'Another parish complaint,' writes Radcliffe on the back, as if he were used to them. Like a wise man he *let* the parish complain, and, after the noise had subsided, quietly commanded Freeston to take office and live it down.

IV

Though they kicked at first against the new order of things, the overseers must have been glad to leave the workhouse in good hands; they had so many other things to do which they could not delegate. Indeed, it wanted more than countrymen's wits to cope with all their duties. It was work enough in itself to keep strangers out of the parish and prevent any doubtful characters, 'as native, householder, sojourner, apprentice or servant,' from gaining a settlement. 'Where a man chanced to be born, there let him bide'; that was their maxim, and one

so thoroughly followed that a man's village or town became as much his prison as the House of Correction itself (vi). Who paused to think of man's inhumanity to man when the parish purse was in question? Certainly not the overseers. One watches them frowning upon all comers-in, and hustling the footsteps of all goers-out. Of a Sunday morning after the service notice would be given to the congregation of the names of new-comers to the parish, so that inquiry might be made into their morals and their means. To stay or not to stay—that was the question to be decided by the overseers, 'as they in their grave wisdoms shall thinke most meete'—a question often leading to unpleasantness and law as between parish and parish and sometimes to breaches of the peace (420. 145). One lights upon ineffectual complaints from those 'random poor' who are 'tossed to and froo' in the attempt to settle the place of their nativity, and others whom the overseers browbeat and bribe 'to kreepe by stealth and privately' into a neighbouring parish.

The accounts are quite heartless in their phrasing: '1710. For a woman's lodging and vituals, and to be rid of her, 1s. 3d.': '1731. A warrant to take up intruders, 1s.': '1751. Paid to a woman big with child and two children to go out of town, 4d.': '1768. Gave Edward Fairbeard to go to the hand-post with a woman and two children, 1s.': '1771. Paid Thomas Spikenard for flitting the widow Caudle, 2s.': '1772. Paid Mary Gregory to go away, her child having the Small Pox, 7s.' Some who were well disposed to go they helped along the way: '1730. To Jane Gregory to bear her charges into the hay country, 24s.': and '1740. Gave Ephraim Fairfreckle when he went to look work, 2s. 6d.' Nor were they always brutal to sick persons: '1751. Paid a poor man very ill that lay in William Thomas's close, 6d.': '1755. Gave two men in the small-pox, 2s.': '1761. Gave a poore walking man with the falling sickness, 1s.': '1762. To a pore cripple wench, 4d.': '1763. Pd. Mr. Kershaw to carry a woman to London as fell bad in Tile house Street, 3d.'

vi. 'You are overlooking the certificates under the Act of 1679,' writes Sidney Webb to me. It is true that this device did enable a goodly number to look for work and to live outside their place of settlement on the undertaking of their own parish overseers to support them if and when they should become chargeable. But after collating the certificates preserved with our parish records with the overseers' accounts of the same period, I am convinced that the certificated were few in comparison with the uncertificated many who 'intruded themselves' into our parish.

This sort of charity was hardly single-minded; it saved the risk of such persons becoming chargeable to the parish. Sooner than that, their hands must be lifted against every stranger at their gates. Foreigners were to be moved on at all costs: '1768. Paid Thomas Cutler for himself and three men going in search of the Welch men who got out of the Workhouse, he being unsensible, 1s. 6d.; and to the Welch man at his departure out of the town, 3s.'; '1756. Paid the Irish man to get him away, 1s. 6d.'; '1811. Paid for conveying a Forreiner, name unintelligible, to Hertford, he being suspected of being a deserter from a Swiss Regiment, 11s.' (402. 9).

It is a motley crowd of beggars, 'shivering with cold and wanting the God of this world, Money,' that limps before one in these eighteenth-century accounts; dingy and destitute folk, with neither home nor hope, halting a moment on the confines of our township, then out again upon their pilgrimage of poverty into the inhospitable world. It was only the few, and those the worst of them, the overseers could afford to help. As Isaac Barrow said in a once famous sermon on *The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor*, they gave only 'when a sad object made vehement impression on them.' God knows there were plenty such, and the accounts portray them to the life: '1749. Gave to ten Algerian slaves, 3s.': '1757. Gave to an aged poore man being starved, 6d.': '1758. Paid Mumbling Moll, 8d.': '1773. Gave to a poore lame scholler, 6d.' (2. 53 & 54). The curious student will discover further doles to 'a ship-wrecked woman,' to a 'decayed gent' who bore the cheery vagrom name of Captain Jolly Barefoot,' and to another 'outlandish distressed gentleman,' who went by the still more outlandish name of 'Ferdinando Squib' (2. 56. 57).

Squibs might go off all right, but many of these mendicants remained. If the overseers escorted them to the hand-post, they turned again, and by some twitchel or alley got back into the town. Some were even spiteful enough to die, as the Irish say, *upon the parish*; which was a nuisance, because the cost of their interment fell upon the town. In the year that Queen Anne really died, 1714, a pauper burial could be done for 7s., coffin and woollen and all. But by the middle of the century the charge was doubled: '1736. Paid for a man taken upon the street, his burial charge, 17s. 10d.': '1770. Paid for burying the man, unknown, that was froze to death, 16s.' Amongst

THE TROOPER'S ARMS IN 1860

the crowd of similar charges we may notice that of ' one Wilshere ' who is said to have ' perished himself ' in Wratten, and that of a child, found abandoned in the rushes at Oughton Head, whom the overseers most fittingly named Moses (2. 58). At a time when men starved themselves to afford a glorious funeral, it was bitter, indeed, to be buried at the charge of the parish ; to come at last to a parish shell and the little bell tolling hastily for a pauper's burial. Until the middle of the last century the coffins of paupers were taken to St. Mary's in the ' Old Burying Cart,' and many people still remember the long, narrow contrivance on two wheels with an inmate driver sitting up in front, flogging the broken-winded poor-house pony along. It was an exact illustration of Thomas Noel's *Pauper's Drive* :—

> ' Rattle his bones over the stones ;
> He's only a pauper whom nobody owns.'

To show the brutal carelessness that once prevailed, the coffin on one occasion was taken down as usual, and the curate had begun to read the burial service when it was discovered that the body had been left behind. After that the workhouse porter was required to attend funerals and see that all was done decently and in order.

V

Of a truth ' this worshippful office,' as the statutes term it, was no sinecure. If the paupers died of poverty, the overseers had every reason to die of overwork ; one has only to read their accounts to see why the penalties for refusing office were so heavy. ' Environed with multitudes of poore, pestiferous creatures,' their worships were worried to distraction, morning and afternoon and night. ' The pore peopell due soe hunt mee,' complains Edward Lawrence to ' his esteemed good friend, Mr. John Chauncy,' in 1675, ' that I cannot rest for them. Pray deliver thare petishon for them as sune as posibell ' (72. 1. 260). Take any page at random. See them with a war on, as usual against the French, beguiling the wastrels into the Troopers' Arms that the Sergeant might ply them with free beer, press the King's shilling into their palms (vii) and cart them off in wagons

vii. See Quarter Session Rolls, Herts, 1. 394 : ' 1691. Information of Susan Glenister that when George Venables was sitting by the fire at the

before their wits were clear: '1728. Jan. 24. Paid at the Sun attending the justices with the Prest men and Town Ladys (i.e. lads), 3s. 2d.': '1744. Information against Wm. Bentley for cutting off two of his fingers to avoid being enlisted in the King's Service': '1745. Places and times to impress men, at the Sun, Hitchin, Tuesday, 7th May' (402. 10, 11). Not pleasant work this for the overseers, especially when, as in 1734, one of the forced recruits, Edward Horseshoe, broke loose, and being taken prisoner was shot in the Sand Dells for desertion; and when, as in 1780, an inquest had to be held on another soldier who stabbed himself sooner than go to the wars (402. 12). Still, it proved useful if there was any deficit in their accounts. Under an 'Act for Raising Soldiers' (43 Eliz. c. 3) the overseers received £3 head-money for any recruit they supplied; and they generally took care to select single men without dependents: 'All idle, loose and vagabond persons who have not wife or children,' as the statute had defined them. For example, Thomas Smith, a chimney-sweep, whom they sent into the army in 1709, was only a slip of a boy; his head-money would be sheer, undeductible profit. Even if separation allowances had to be paid, they were not heavy burdens. As late as 1794, when the Right Honourable Lord Clive orders an allowance for Elizabeth, the wife of William Smith, of Hitchin, the amount is only fourteen pence a week (413). Pensions for 'maimed soldiers and sailors' the overseers were lucky enough to escape; these were administered by the justices out of a county fund; and, by the way, no student should miss the petitions on which their grants were made, for the campaigns and exploits of the soldiers are set forth in full and vivid fashion. Here is one of an early date concerning a Bishop's Stortford man who was born in Hitchin Town. '1616. Petition of Matthew Barnes: Shows that whereas he served many times in the wars, namely, first voluntarily in Spain and Portugal under Sir John Norrice, general, and Sir Francis Drake; secondly, pressed into France by Sir John Leventhorp to serve under Sir Henry Docwra at the siege of "Roane," to whom he was firstly

George Inn, at Hatfield, a soldier known as John White came to him and pulled out some money, saying, "There is all the money I have left of the King's, here is a round O, look on it." Robert Venables took it into his hand and looked on it, and would have returned it to the soldier again but he refused to take it, saying, "You are now a soldier," upon which Robert Venables flung down the shilling upon the bench and said he would not take it.'

sergeant and afterwards mustered ancient [i.e. standard-bearer] of his Company by Sir Thomas Coningsby, muster master, in which country he also served on three other several occasions, voluntarily under the King of France at the taking of Gourney; thirdly, he went voluntarily into the Low Countries and served there one year under Captain Wilford and Captain Fairfax as Sergeant of their Companies. And lastly he served in Ireland voluntarily as sergeant under Sir George Carey. Having received many wounds, spent many years in the said services, impoverished himself and overthrown his youthful fortunes, he begs for a pension' (72. 1. 44).

What chiefly concerned the overseers, however, was not foreign but civil war, that intestine strife with the ignoble army of beggars which no peace would ever bring to an end and which every statute seemed to increase. For a large number of these beggars became so by the effect of the Enclosure Acts, which deprived them of their holdings. No less than 3,554 Enclosure Acts were rushed through Parliament in the reign of George III. The open and common-fields of Walsworth (881 acres) were not enclosed until 1766 (the very worst period of all, when, as Mr. Chesterton observed, the Commons were employed in stealing the commons); but as early as 1653 the overseers had purchased a pamphlet by one John Moore on this *then* pressing scandal, entitled *The Crying Sin of England of not Caring for the Poor, wherein Inclosure, such as doth Unpeople Townes and Uncorn Fields is Arraigned, Convicted and Condemned* (14. & 2. 59).

Of the beggars thus brought into the world, how terribly terse and cruel is the description in the early books of the *Justice of the Peace*: '*Vagabondus qui errat per mundum sine spe, sine sede, sine re, sine fide*—starveling folk who straggle their way through the world without hope or habitation or sustenance or faith.' How to relieve and not to be deceived, that was the question; how to trust and not be tricked. For, as their books of instruction told them, 'there are to be reckoned 3 sortes of poor,' and they must discriminate between them. First of all, there are 'such as are poor by impotency, which comprises aged, decrepit, lame, blind, distracted persons and infants; secondly, such as become poor by casualty, which includes persons maimed, undone by fire, and overcharged with children; and thirdly, such as have made themselves poor by rioting, idleness and drink.'

It is the last class which gives the trouble—the lewd, wandering, filching persons who lead a roguish life and have no visible estate to support themselves, 'who refuse to be bestowed in anie of the abiding-places [workhouses] but covet still to hold on to their trade of begging.' Following a comprehensive definition of these rogues and vagabonds in 13 Anne c. 26, the Herts justices in 1741 made a catalogue of their own for the guidance of the overseers. 'These are to be accounted Vagrants, all patent gatherers or gatherers of alms under false pretences of loss by fire, collectors for prisons, fencers and bearwards, players of interludes, minstrels, jugglers, gypsies, pretenders to physiognomy or palmestry, fortune-tellers, persons that play at unlawful games, or do run away from their wives and families; also all petty-chapmen, or pedlars without licence, and wanderers lodging in barns or outhouses, or pretending to be soldiers, mariners or seafaring men; persons living idly and refusing to work for common wages or ranginge abroade from place to place' (402. 14). With such the statutes are merciless and plain; they are to be haled forthwith to the House of Correction, 'there to be strictly kept as well in diet as in worke.' They shall be set to labour 'from twilight to twilight, and be corrected by whipping.' Fortunately the constable was responsible for whipping, though the overseers were expected to be present. 'They shall be stripped naked from the middle upwards and lashed until their bodies be bloody in the presence of the minister of the parish or some other inhabitant, and then sent away to the place of their birth.' Here is a typical case from the Herts Quarter Sessions Rolls of 1725: 'Thomas Clarke and William Caldwell, charged with being wandering vagrants and having no visible way of getting an honest livelyhood, and refusing to give security for their good behaviour, are ordered to be whipped at Hertford, Ware and Hitchin on three Market dayes, to lye in goale till next Sessions and there kept to harde laboure' (402. 15). And here is another case in respect of a woman: 'Mary Johnson, committed to the House of Correction at Hitchin as a vagrant, is adjudged to be a rogue and vagabond and is ordered to be publicly whipped at Hitchin between the hours of 12 and 2 o'clock on Oct. 4th, and then to be passed to the place of her settlement' (402. 16).

VI

If one turns from the punitive and deterrent side of the Poor Law to the domestic, it is much the same. 'From twilight to twilight' their worships were incessantly at work. At the beck and call of every inhabitant, no wonder they got their nickname of 'father-in-law of the parish.' By their detractors they have been described as either 'actively mischievous or solidly inert.' Over-officious they certainly were, but 'inert' in a parish of this size they had little chance to be. What a busy hum of men arises from the reading of their accounts; what a coming and going; what a thronging, multifarious world of things to do! The girl Mathews must have a new 'pair of pattins, 10d.'; and somebody must go to John Moore's shop and get 'two caps for old Cocker, 1s.' The barber must have his 3s. 4d. for shaving old Muzzel the paralytic (2. 61); and, if old Sarah Cornfoote can swallow nothing else, perhaps she should be supplied with half a dozen pigeons (2. 64). 'Charles Coquey in distresse,' must be furnished with a 'pair of breeks,' not second-hand buckskin as before but real leather ones this time, 3s., that will last out the rest of his days. Poor John Bailey must have a shilling 'for the support of his family, he being destitute of a house.' Two shillings must be doled out for 'a porridge pott for old Gamble,' 5d. 'for leading strings for Lamb's child,' and another 5d. 'for a pair of spectacles for Kate.' Someone must go round with the petition against those interlopers from other towns who were setting up shop against them and contributing nothing in rates (viii). Someone, too, must be paid for 'searching for Godfrey's will,' so that Lawyer Hanscombe (to whom they already owe 12s. 6d. for 'a pair of leases') may know how to administer his little hoard of money. They must hunt up two justices to countersign the certificates for those hard-to-please townsmen who were tired of Hitchin and wanted to wander off and find a living elsewhere (421); and they must pay their crier, John Lyle, his 1s. 6d. 'for warning people, not

viii. 1663. Petition sent to Herts Quarter Sessions by the poor tradesmen and inhabitants of Hitchin, showing that William Pembroke and others living in other towns kept shops and good stocks in the said town of Hitchin and drove very great trades there on market-days to the hindrance and loss of the petitioners. They had taxed these 'forreners' to the poor of Hitchin, but they refused to pay the tax, and the petitioners prayed they might be compelled to do so (72. . 157).

having certificates, out of the town.' They must not forget to caution the tradesmen and farmers not to hire anyone over fifty-one weeks at a time, lest a year's service should give him a settlement and the right to parish relief. Better to be on the safe side, though Hanscombe had advised them that fifty-two weeks would do (ix). There was Stephen Swaine, the master of the Workhouse, in 1822, wanting 'a new pair of crimson plush breeches' in place of those which had been stolen by William Pain. There was the Bell-man, always wanting a new staff. Then again there were the rents of the Charity land to collect, and distribute to 'pious and pauperous uses,' and lists of Quakers to make out and carry to Hertford, with the returns of the chimney tax (420). It is clear that this last was an unpopular imposition. '1685. Presentment of John Thorpe for speaking malicious and opprobrious words concerning the King, that is, that "he wished they were hanged that first made the Act of Parliament for the hearth money"' (72. 1. 354). The overseers shared the general dislike of the tax, and, being always jealous of the King's officers and the odious farmers of the King's taxes, they did what they could to count the chimneys short, and relieve where they dare not remit.

As if vagrants and Governments were not troublesome enough, there were the vermin also, especially those that were thought to carry the plague. These had to be counted just as carefully as the chimneys. It was for the overseers to get in the farmers' contributions under the old statute of 8 Eliz. c. 15, and along with the wardens to pay head-money for what was brought to them, e.g. 'for killing a weasel, 2d.: for a pole-cat, 4d.: for 30 urchins [i.e. hedgehogs] at 2d. each, 5s.: for an otter, 2s.: for a fox, 2s. 6d.: for a raven, 3d.' All manner of townsmen, from chimney-sweep to squire, bring in their 'heads and tails,' and claim the stated reward: '1720. Paid for one urchin as I killed myself, 4d.'—so one of the overseers enters in the account; and here behold an item that should make any follower of 'the noble science' rub his astonished eyes: '1736. To cash paid Mr. Hale's Huntsman for a fox, 2s. 6d.' One is horrified to see that bullfinches and kingfishers are also branded as

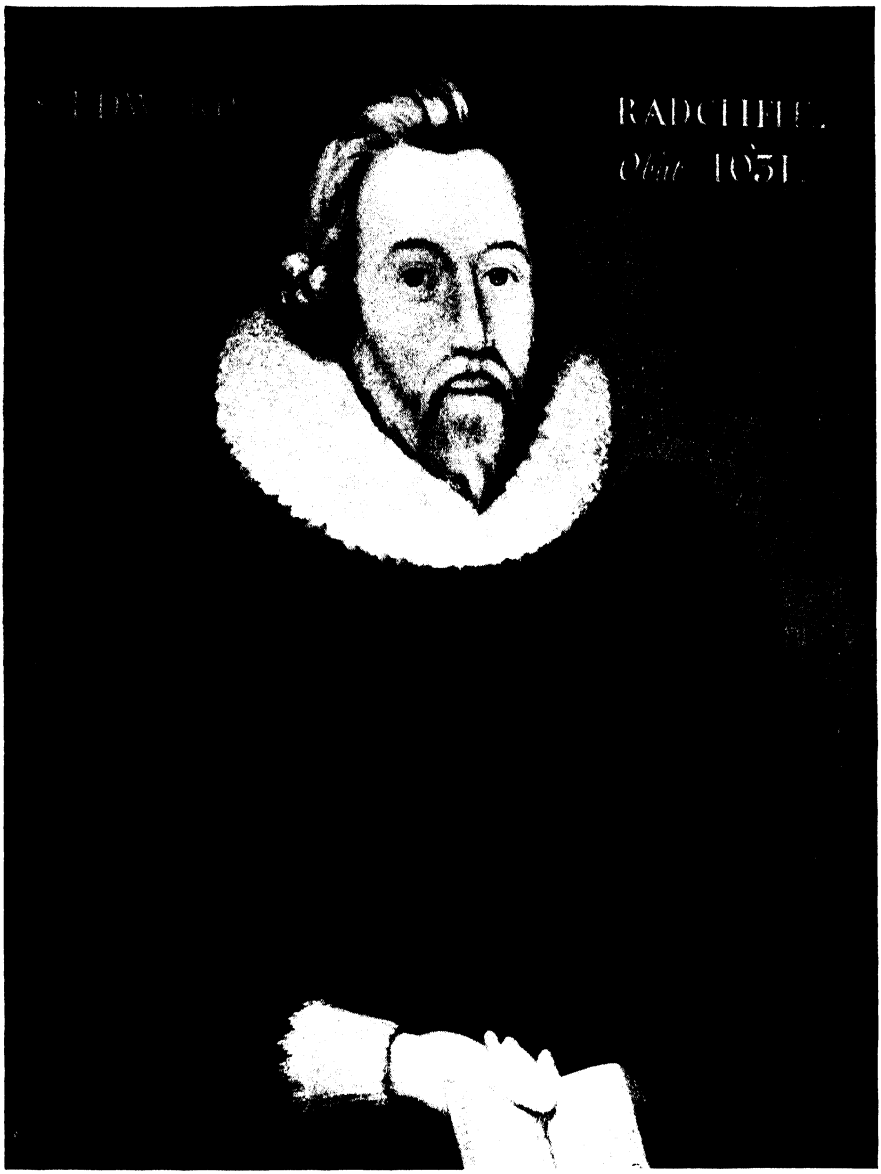
ix. As Lord Ellenborough remarked in a celebrated 'settlement' case: 'Fifty-two weeks do not make a year. There are but 364 days in 52 weeks, and 365 days, 6 hours and 49 minutes in a year. The question is purely arithmetical, and the overseers will in future know the difference between a contract for 52 weeks and a contract for a year.'

vermin, and their beautiful heads rated at no more than a penny apiece. Even dogs were suspect. In 1789 the beadle, Henry Gilby, was paid a trifle for 'cautioning people to take care of their dogs,' and the reason for this appears not long before. 'Paid to Abel Cains for to go to be dipt for the bite of a mad dog, 10s. 6d.: Paid £3 7s. 4d. for carrying Dimsey's wife to be dipt at Gravesend.'

Of all the trials that beset the overseers, perhaps those relating to illegitimate or chance children were the most unpleasant to bear. Hardly a man's job, yet each year on an average there were brought to their notice, or to their very arms, more than the number of urchins above named. As one of the overseers observed in 1753, 'this parish consists of none but beggars and bastards' (2. 66). And what else, after all, could he expect? As Dorothy Marshall has truly observed in her book, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century*: 'Where overcrowding was the rule of life, where gin-drinking was its only relaxation, then was life mean, nasty, brutish and short, and there was little to encourage the virtues of sobriety and providence.' As for the overseers, not only were they bound by their duties 'to arrest every person who drops a child in a parish with intent that it may perish or the parish be charged with the keeping,' but they were compelled to track down the absconding father and marry him by main force. This proved no easy matter. Sometimes it was the mother who absconded and left the child on the town: '1706. Paid Piercey for two horses to goe after the woman that left the child in Tylers Street, 2s.: Paid George Thorpe's wife for lookeinge after the child, 3d.' As soon as Piercey came back from Luton with the mother, the overseers gave her a shilling to pick up her baby and find a settlement elsewhere. If the child perished, well that was a merciful deliverance and saved a world of trouble. '1703. For a knell and a grave for Monkes child, 6d.: 1707. Buried Sarah Ignotia [i.e. Unknown], the child who was laid in the malthouse.' And here again, terse and brutal in the telling, is another sordid but not unusual story: '1717. Sept. 29. Paid Widow Shepherd for a Rugg and blanket for Dumb Bess, 3s.: Dec. 8th. Paid Ann Newton for a blanket for Dumb Bess's child, 1s.: Dec. 15th. Paid for a warrant to take up the Miller who got the bastard, 1s.: 1718. Aug. 31st. Paid for a coffin for Dumb Bess's child, 2s.' Take them as a whole, however, these illegitimate or love-children proved un-

commonly sturdy; the less they were wanted, the more they managed to survive. Accordingly, one finds the overseers in a spirit of Christian resignation presenting these young urchins at the church to be baptised. '1740. Expenses at baptising the child of a travelling woman and in procuring godfathers, 1s. 6d.: 1748. Paid for beer at Hodges christening, 1s.' That was their first duty, to save the soul of the child. Their second was to save the purse of the parish. By the astuteness of the mother or at the instigation of the overseers, an attempt was generally made to denote the fatherhood of these base children in the entry of baptism, e.g.: '1600. John, the *reputed* son of William Graveley. 1603. Marie, the *avouched* daughter of John Rolfe and Agnes Goodall. 1620. Marie, daughter of Joane Rowland, Walter Buche being the *suspected* father of the same child. 1643. John, the *imputed* son of John Far by Mary Gyles' (4). The third duty of the overseers, often a tedious and travelling one, was to make a 'general privy search,' secure the persons of the parents, and bring about the marriage they had anticipated. '1728. Paid the charge at Ware to procure Marvell's daughter's marriage as being with child without the ceremony, £4 11s. 10d.: 1757. To expenses taking up John Page for a bastard child; attending justices and a guard for him; to expenses making up the marriage of him to Ann Lodge; for a dinner and cash (6d.), total £3 11s. 0d.' Sometimes the overseers add a few shillings for the 'wife's fortune,' and a gift of clothing for the child: '1760. Paid for a shift for Nash's natural, 1s. 10d.' The parson gets his fees and the clerk is tipped 2s. for 'coming to say Amen.'

With wedding bells and the clerk chanting 'Amen'—one wishes that all these mischances could have mended and ended in this way, though to be sure the course of free-love did never yet run smooth. Too often the putative fathers outdistanced the overseers, and remain putative to this day. Who shall pity them, hunted from place to place, and branded by law as 'incorrigible rogues'? One has more respect for those who met the scandal of immorality at home, and bowed to the unwritten law of being 'carted bareface through the streets.' Even that was preferable to the state of some poor wretches who languished in single-cursedness in the house of correction, whilst half a dozen parishes disputed the dishonour of their birth. When a gipsy child was born in Tatmore Hills Lane, which is the



SIR EDWARD RADCLIFFE, PHYSICIAN TO JAMES I AND TO THE SICK AND POOR OF HITCHIN

From the original painting by an unknown artist in Hitchin Priory

boundary between Hitchin and St. Ippollitts, it took eleven months to decide which parish was to be charged for its support. The judges, finding that the boundary-line ran down the middle of the road, were disposed to follow Solomon's lead and cut the child in two; whereupon the gipsy mother took up her child and ran, and was never heard of again (5. 23).

VII

This is perhaps the place to tell something of the parish doctor, or as he was styled the 'physician of the poor.' In the early days a common or garden apothecary was thought sufficient for this purpose; and indeed the physicians of that age were altogether too exalted to trouble about ordinary, ailing mortals. Then as now, however, much was done by the devotion of good people to relieve the sick and poor. In the early part of the seventeenth century Sir Edward Radcliffe, who had been physician to James I, retired to Hitchin Priory, and spent the rest of his days in the service of the sick and poor of the parish. The preparation known as Radcliffe's Elixir was famous fifty years before the greater Dr. Radcliffe was in practice. Here, too, in the late seventeenth century, after long foreign travel in the study of physic and anatomy, settled John Hutchenson, 1638–1715, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; of whom the celebrated Dr. Luke Eeles used to say, 'He is a modest man but knows more than all of us' (383. 639). Though licensed to practise *per totam Angliam*, he chose to live in this country town for thirty years, giving advice gratis 'to poor people only for neighbourhood's sake and of pity and of charity.'

Here also, as in every parish, were to be found those who were wise in old countrywomen's catholicons and cordials, and those who had secret knowledge of simples gathered under the light of the moon. But there was none perhaps whose fair name came down the centuries quite so far as Ann Chapman, who died on Ascension Day, 1633. Still used at Communion in St. Mary's is the silver dish she gave to receive the offerings for the poor, and on her gravestone can still be traced these lines:—

> 'A double surgeon she; she oft restored to health
> The pined wretch, as oft the poor to wealth.'

Some of the vicars, like Mark Hildesley, kept a book of herbs for the parish use (Culpepper's *Medicaments for the Poor, or Physic for the Common People*, 1652), and for sixpence one could always consult the herbalist who walked in from Great Wymondley every Tuesday. In spite of quacks and charitable people, however, the parish doctors were left with plenty to do. The contracts which the overseers make with them show a steady increase in salary and supervision. In 1711 Joseph Thompson agrees with the townsmen of Hitchin, for a consideration of £3, 'to use his utmost endeavour in cureing all broken bones, dislocations, strains, tumers, swellings, fistula, gout, ulcers, chances, and all other woundes or thinges whatsoever that belong to a surgeon'; while, at a price just double that of the surgeon, the apothecary, Thomas Ward, covenants to 'take care of all the poor and use his best skill in cureing all fevers, smallpoxes and all other distempers that belong to a Physician' (408). On one of the later contracts, as if to justify the need of them, this couplet is endorsed :—

> 'Because that word and faithe with no degree will stande,
> Therefore, the Lawyer saithe, take writing of their hande.'

It would appear from the accounts that the surgeon, in addition to his salary, claimed occasional refreshers: '1754. Paid for beer when Farey's thigh was sett, 6d.' It would also appear from the accounts that the physicians who farmed out the sick worked on a three-bottle system. If Bateman's drops failed to work a cure, then Godfrey's cordial should be tried; if that failed, one might still resort to the 'barrel of diet drink.' Beside these three there is a mention of 'Doctor's *pill* for the parish,' but that may be a slip of the pen for 'doctor's bill.' Before the close of the seventeenth century this early simplicity of treatment had given place to innumerable inventions: 'hysteric drops, cardiac juleps, sudorific powders, volatile drops, pectoral lohocks, epulotic ointments, attenuating tinctures, peruvian electuaries, cataplasms and boluses.' Those patients who survived the three-bottle system and remained obstinately sick were removed to Mr. Guy's hospital [founded in 1721]; those who by medicine or other mischance were driven furiously mad were loaded with chains or hurried off to Bedlam: '1751. Paid Edward Randall for a barr to keep in Finch's wife, 1s. 8d.; paid for locking up Finch's wife, confining and carrying her

in, 2s.; paid for 2 bundles of straw, 8d.; paid for beer to men that carried her in, 1s. 1752. Paid Matthew Bunyan for carriage of Mad Betty from London, 2s. 6d.'

Those who were accounted sane sometimes behaved as if they, too, were mad. In 1688, for example, Solomon Sanders, of Hitchin, having been persuaded to swallow some unpleasant concoctions, attempted to revenge himself upon the doctor and was soon in custody 'for breaking with stones the windows and several glasses of waters of Wm. Broomfield, chirurgeon.' Another disreputable trick which people played on the parish doctor was to leave an unwanted child on his doorstep: '1712. Paid to the woman for the child which was layd att doctor Ward's gate, 3s.: 1713. Indictment of Rebekah, the wife of John Reynolds of Hitchin, for leaving her daughter, who was suffering from cholera, on the ground outside the dwelling of doctor Thompson.'

VIII

Fortunately there was a nurse attached to the Pest House who could help the doctor in these times of difficulty—a sturdy creature who drank her quart like a man: '1795. Aug. 14. A bill for beer for the nurse, £1 11s. 1d.' Well versed in all the wiles of women, she proved invaluable in cases of malingering: '1763. Paid Richard Farey and Thomas Gent to carry a woman down to workhouse as pretended she was in labour, 9d.' There, on examination, Nurse Ansell soon discovered the pretence, with the result that the woman was taken to the Bridewell, there to labour in very deed. In the Pest House at the Folly, which was the nurse's special province, the treatment seems to have consisted of soap, gin, small beer and playing cards. Compared with the workhouse, the diet was generous, not to say dangerous. It was evidently felt that, if the patients had to die, they should at least die sumptuously. 'Sheeps-head and pluck' is often prescribed; and once, when a soldier fell with the smallpox, they fed him on pork, which only a sergeant of dragoons could have survived. Other items that frequently recur are 'potts of stuff for the itch,' and 'flower of brimstone' to disinfect the rooms: '1734. Paid for airing the Folly, 1s. 3d.'

By mid-Georgian days the doctors were beginning to see that the whole town needed to be 'aired.' It is only a writer of modern notions and modern nose like Mr. Lytton Strachey

who can deplore with sufficient disgust 'the nauseating filth of the highways, the fever flitting through the ghastly tenements of the poor.' But the parish doctors even then had a dim idea that things were not what they ought to be. At a time when overseers in general were disposed to do nothing for the sick persons of the parish ('Let them lye and hang and rot,' remarked George Eliot of Hunsdon in 1640) (72. 1. 62), the doctors were proposing remedies in plenty. It was they who called 'divers of the better and wiser sorte of the parishoners' together in a time of crisis: '1756. Paid for a meeting about the smallpox,' and consulted with the famous physician, Dimsdale of Hertford, about the wisdom of inoculation (x). '1757. Paid for enoculating Seymour's wife with the Cow pock, 3s.' Tired of wasting words with the overseers, they were driven to lay information in their own names against such as spread disease in careless or wanton ways: '1694. Presentment of Thomas Browne of Hitchin for entertaining of vagrants, which hath brought disease into the towne and prejudiced severall familyes therein' (162. 37). In 1777 Dr. Midwinter told the justices that the cottagers of Dead Street, swarming in 'hovels heaped up together and smothered,' were no better than 'housed beggars,' the very phrase that Bacon had used two centuries before (2. 69). Again and again he and his fellow-physicians in the county worked upon the overseers to make presentment to Quarter Sessions of houses 'unfit for a Christian to inhabit,' and to indict those who built new tenements without 'laying thereto four acres of land,' according to the enlightened and much-neglected statute of Elizabeth. After the bread riots at Baldock and Hitchin in 1795, it was mainly by persuasion of the doctors that the justices, 'in order that their poore neighbours might not starve,' pledged themselves to reduce their household consumption of wheat flour by one-third, till the bushel had fallen to 8s. (xi) (72. 2. 183). It was they who brought home to the magistrates the need for limiting the quantity of malt and for suppressing ale-houses, so that more barley might be available for the bread of the poor. Again in

x. There were no less than nine epidemics of smallpox between 1740 and 1772, some of them being significantly described as being 'very brief and mortal.' '1751. Paid John Person for a board to lay the dead on at the Folly, 1s. 8d.' After some experience of these epidemics, the parish doctor declined to include smallpox cases in his contract with the overseers.

xi. They were binding themselves without knowing it for more than twenty years.

1799, holding that the overseers, in Barrow's fine phrase, were but 'the stewards, the caterers of God for the rest of men, having a strict charge to dispense unto every man his meat in due season,' they urged them to revive the 'alms-tub' and distribute potatoes to the poor (202). When the cost of everything rose by leaps and bounds, they went round with a petition to quarter sessions for the fixing of maximum prices under an old statute, passed in a similar time of distress, 'by reason whereof (so runs the preamble) a marvellous multitude of the poor of the realm be not able to provide meat, drink and clothes necessary for themselves, their wives and children, and be so discouraged with misery and poverty that they fall daily to theft, robbery and other *inconveniences* [*sic*] or die pitifully for hunger and cold.' Moved by this petition, the overseers summoned a parish meeting, 'to consider proper measures for the employment of the labouring poor.' It was resolved to institute soup-kitchens, and 'to send the labourers on their rounds to the different farmers of the parish, and that the married men should be paid 9s. per week and the single men 6s. per week' (415).

Looking back over these merciful interventions, one feels that the parish doctors were in act and deed the friends of the poor, for if by mischance they killed off a few of the King's sick subjects by their medicines, they saved many lives by foresight and sympathy in times of famine.

IX

And now, before dismissing the overseers to their final account, let us look more curiously into what they call their 'disburstments and axedential charges.' One would like to lay these before a chartered accountant just to hear what he would say. The writing, with the ancient, thrice-cut quill scratching its way like a weary hen across the page; the spelling, e.g. 'Ann Envertry [i.e. inventory] of woot goods was bort for the Hous of Maintinance' (xii), the arithmetical chaos, e.g. 'For

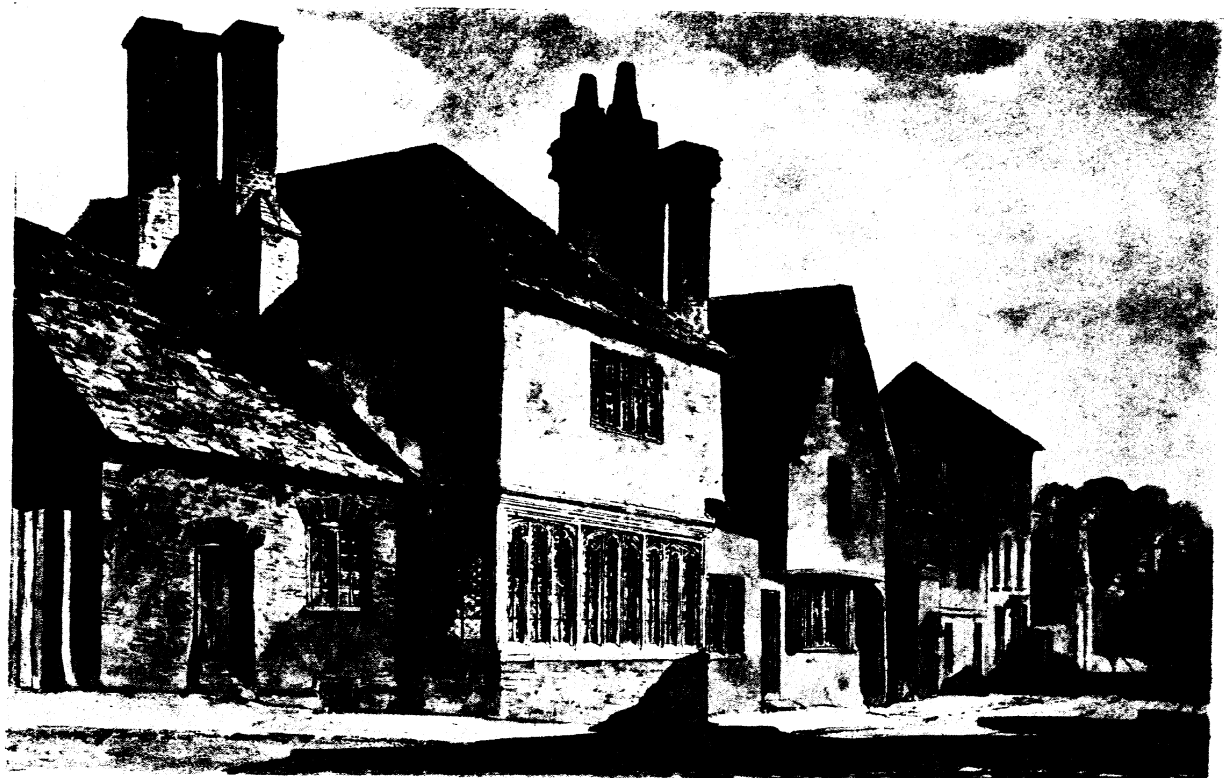
xii. As a rule the misspelling did not matter. Once, however, a trifling error cost the Hitchin overseers a lot of money. They had to obtain an order of the justices to remove a bastard child to Barkway. The clerk in making out the order put an 's' on to the end of the word Barkway, and the Court of Common Pleas was asked to quash it. The judges, however, refused, for 'though,' they said, 'it hath a letter too much, the sound was much the same.' Successful though they were, the overseers had to make a special rate to pay the irrecoverable portion of their costs.

a mistake on the page before, £10': 'Total sum *if right*, £3 6. 5.': 'Miscounted with Mr. Newman, 3d.'; these would dissuade any but the painful antiquary from poring over these folios of interminable ink. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, one of the schoolmasters or attorneys was given a trifle each year to 'minuting the vestry meetings,' 'riting up the Buck,' and 'weighting' [i.e. balancing] or 'figgeringe' the accounts.

That, at any rate, put an end to the unpleasantness and bickering that generally accompanied the passing of the accounts. In earlier days reflections were frequently cast upon the honesty of the overseers; they were accused of being 'defrauders of the rights of God's poor, and thieves of Christian alms intended for them,' whereas it was merely the clumsy muddle-headedness of the accounts that was to blame. Hardly once in a century is any defrauding to be traced (xiii). After all, the overseers were chosen from 'the men of most worship in the town,' and there was an air of piety and religious sanction over all their work. The rate itself was made in the church after morning service of a Sunday, the overseers being requested to stay behind for the purpose. Each month it was their bounden duty to meet again in the church, and consult with the wardens about the relief of the poor. The overseer living at Langley Hamlet who in 1688 did not see why he should trouble to come down was sent for by the constable and fined (xiv). All these things were done decently and in order. And never in county history had it been otherwise, save once, when the parishioners of Amwell, being at church making a rate, one William Curtys took the rate, and, winding it up together, put it in his pocket, and, upon the constable being sent to recover it, Curtys 'did chuck him under the chin and call him "goose-cappe the constable and

xiii. Hitchin Town had a cleaner administration than most. Compare the preamble to the Bill for the 'Regulation of Close Vestries, 1716,' which alleges on a general view that 'money collected for the poore was diverted from that goodly intent and spent on riotous feasts and turned to the private profit of persons who ought in a special manner to have had the interests of the poor in mind, to the great dishonour of Almighty God and scandal of all charitable Christians, and the starving of great numbers of poor men, women and children who have miserably perished and do daily perish.'

xiv. One instance more of the independent spirit so prevalent in the hamlets. Four years later, 1692, they persuaded the justices at Quarter Sessions to issue an order requiring the overseers of Hitchin 'to shew cause (if they have any) why the hamletts of Preston *cum* Langley within the chapelry of Minsden should not have a particular overseer for the takeinge care of the poore within the said hamletts' (402. 18).



THE COOPERS' ARMS

From the painting by J. C. Buckler, 1832

fool"' (72. 1. 51). Evidently Curtys had had 'one or two' as the saying goes; an offence, if indeed it were one, or error in simple addition, which no eighteenth-century overseer could without hypocrisy condemn. They needed too much forgiveness for themselves upon the selfsame score. In the *Dissertation on Drunkenness*, published in 1708, it is remarked as of common knowledge that 'overseers go to the Tavern and get drink with the Poor's Box.' And here at Hitchin we were no purist exception to that rule. The accounts are drenched in liquor. Any reasonable man would agree that the unwilling holder of an unpaid and bothersome office should have an occasional drink to wash his duties down, but there was far too much of it. Quite early in George I's reign the overseers discovered that the monthly meetings in the church were depressing, cold as charity, and ill-adapted to business. They were bound to hold them there, but were advised by a brilliant and thirsty-minded clerk that it was sufficient to *begin* the sittings at the church. That would satisfy the law, and then they could satisfy themselves by adjourning immediately, 'to finish the business,' in the parlour of a tavern in the town. No favours were shown. No house was tied to the overseers, like the Bricklayers' Arms and the Coopers' Arms to the followers of those trades. Each was given a turn: 'Spent at the Cock with the officers and Towns men: Spent at the George on Town business: Spent with the Justices at Noys Coffee House: Spent with the Sergeant at the Red House: Paid at the Sun when we consulted about the cows, 1s. 6d.' These are items of every week's occurrence, and potations at the 'Swan,' the 'Red Lion,' the 'Chequer,' follow swiftly in their train. If you analyse the first quarter of 1724, you will discover twelve items of liquor for thirty spent in relief, a scandalous disproportion. Apparently the auditor thought so, too; he has set crosses in the margin against the bills for drink, but it does not look as if in the end they were disallowed. As long as the overseers turned up sober to the audit, they stood in little danger (xv). There were ways and means, moreover, of appeasing the scruples of an auditor. After sipping a few friendly bespoken pints he was inclined to smile indulgently

xv. The audit did not produce its sobering effect in every parish. In the overseers' account book of Threekingham, Lincs, for 1811, there is the following undertaking on the part of an overseer: 'I promise for the time to come not to be in a state of intoxication on the account day, on pain of forfeiting three bottles of wine. John Buckberry.'

upon official entries of the kind. Drink is a great reconciler; and an auditor whose conscience had been drowned in audit ale could be made to wink even at the reinstatement of charges previously disallowed: '1721. To a Bill for Beer in the disburstments and taken out, £1 14s. 6d.'

Nor were gifts in season to be spurned, or fail in effect on the next audit day: '1754. New Year's Day. Paid for a Turkey to send as a present to Mr. Bevis of London, 6s.' It was from him the overseers learnt the trick of bringing all their bills for liquor together at the end in that blessedly convenient word 'sundries,' which covers such a multitude of sins. This is not defrauding in the broad sense of that word, but anyone can see how it unsteadied the overseers in the execution of their office. Not content with small-beer, which leaves a man still master of his wits, they plied themselves with audit ale and wine. Valiantly turning a blind eye on the growing deficit in their accounts, they leave unpaid the bills they ought to pay, and pledge themselves and their successors to expenditures they ought never to incur. Gentle letters of expostulation come in from tired creditors, like Ayfield and Neal, who had made a survey of the parish in 1811, and three years later were still out of pocket for the work 'we so laboriously earned under you; this is a neglect which ought to weight in the breast of the whole parish' (4. 18. 114). Others are less patient. A high-up county official, offended by the pot-house pompousness of these petty parish officers, complains of their wild generosity to the poor, 'on a scale too sumptuous and proceedeth of their high and prodigal minds' (402. 18). At the Cock Inn, with their boon fellows about them, they could afford to chuckle at such complaints, but towards the end of the year, with the day of judgment coming upon them, a wave of panic would send them clutching at any device to rake in money and reduce their deficit. That was the time when boys were supplied to the army at £3 a head; when justices' clerks were pestered to hand over the fines that under certain statutes were payable to the poor (xvi), when the

xvi. The titles of some of these statutes throw a whimsical light upon the doings and misdoings of those days, e.g.: 'Of a parson for not reading Common Prayer once a month. Of profane swearers or cursers according to their quality. Of such as shall meet out of their parishes on Sundays for pastime. Of townsmen tippling in the ale-houses. Of ale-house-keepers selling less than one quart of their best ale or two quarts of their small ale for a penny. Of those who shoot in a gunne at hayres or pigeons, or course any hayres in the snow with a gray-hound.'

parish stock of hemp and leather and flax was conveyed out of the workhouse and sold for what it would fetch.

In course of time the extravagances of the parish officers aroused a more active opposition; and one attempt after another was made to supersede them. Between 1795 and 1804, as Arthur Young had noted, the Hitchin rates had risen from 4s. to 12s. in the pound (417). From a Government return of 1814 the ratepayers discovered that out of a rateable value of only £13,021 they were paying £1,940 a year on the maintenance of their poor. As if that were not enough, they were also asked to pay £120 a year for the families of those who served in the Militia, £79 for 'law-suits, removals and expenses,' and £698 for church rates, county rates and highway rates. Whilst they themselves groaned under the cost of a war which had drained the country dry, the overseers were maintaining 133 able-bodied idlers permanently in the luxury of the workhouse, and giving occasional largesse to 117 more (419). It was unendurable.

The first step in the direction of reform was taken in 1821, when a select vestry was constituted 'for the concerns of the poor.' Of the 'twelve leading inhabitants' of which it was composed, no less than six were Quakers, it being felt that their impeccable, economical, immovable minds were precisely fitted to cope with the financial chaos. The second step was taken in 1828, when some Hitchin Quakers outside the select vestry set up a *Society for the Relief of Distressed Travellers and the Discouragement of Vagrancy and Begging*. Established primarily 'to deal with the influx of wanderers from the capital,' this society proved most useful, and in the first month of its existence investigated and relieved 810 cases, independent of the wives and children of the applicants. Instead of the accustomed dole of money, there was a distribution of bread, cheese or meat to the value of 4d. per head to help the benighted traveller on his way. By organizing ability, and success in checking the prodigal expenditure of the overseers, the Society gained a wide reputation, and became the model of many similar undertakings in other parts of England.

The third step was taken in 1833, by which time both the Select Vestry and the Society seem to have grown weary in well-doing. Once again the paupers were multiplying and the rates were mounting up. From 1830 to 1833 there was an increase in poor relief of £1,300. The times were so evil that no over-

seer could be induced to take up the office; one after another refused to serve and paid the appointed fine. At last Thomas Hailey, of Highover Farm, volunteered. If he were given a free hand—and this was instantly conceded—he thought he could avert the ruin that stared them in the face. As soon as he was armed with authority, he presented himself at the workhouse, and informed the pampered paupers that the time had come for them to work. No work, no workhouse; no labour, no relief. They were dumbfounded. It was outrageous. He could not be serious. Just to humour the poor man, some of them sauntered after him to Highover Farm, where he thrust spades into their soft hands and ordered them to dig. The result was exactly as he had foreseen. The few honest ones dug willingly enough to earn their livelihood at 1½d. a pole. The others threw down their spades when the first blister inconvenienced their hands. One day was enough for most of them. They came, they digged, they cursed and they departed. Highover and Hitchin saw them no more. Before a month was out Hailey reduced the numbers in the workhouse from 100 to 30. Only the impotent and sick were left. When he undertook his office, 'the workhouse was a most disgraceful spectacle; the continual influx of paupers making it impossible to keep it clean.' Long before he left it the place was spick and span; the influx was stemmed; the town of Hitchin was being avoided by every self-respecting loafer as though it had the plague. In a letter which Hailey wrote to Lord Salisbury in 1833 (xvii), he describes how 'the other landowners, finding the state of the town, which under the former system was in a continual state of disturbance and riot, entirely reformed, consented to set apart two acres in every hundred for the same purpose,' so that there might be digging enough to deter every son of Adam who came near. But the one thing needful, as he saw it, was a succession of overseers with the courage of his convictions, and a set of assistants who were worthy of their hire: 'The great and alarming evils which prevail have chiefly arisen from leaving the management to mercenaries. They are evils, my Lord, that will, if not in time corrected, swallow up the whole landed property in the country' (423).

Unfortunately no second Hailey arose. Single-handed he

xvii. This was thought worthy to be printed in the first report of the Poor Law Commissioners. See Appendix A, part iii, 71*a*.

had fought a whole army of beggars and put them utterly to flight; but no sooner had this saviour of his country 'gone back to his plough' than the advance-guards of beggardom reappeared; as impudent and ineradicable as the charlock on Highover Farm. He had fought a good fight. He had kept his faith. But not to him nor to any overseer was it given to hear those comfortable words 'Thy warfare is accomplished.'

X

The poor are always with us. 'Poor of necessity we must have,' argues an ancient writer, 'for so Christ hath said, until His latter coming.' But it is time now to take leave of the overseers. Let that be done with all charity, forgiveness and thanks, remembering the while that 'this worshippful office' was rarely undertaken out of pride or profit, but under compulsion for the public good. Happily it is the province of history to set down and record, not to sit in judgment upon men and things. But the literary drudge may be allowed the licence occasionally of an *obiter dictum*, or at least a flourish of his pen in farewell to those with whom he has tarried in thought for a season. In common justice something is due to these worthies whom there were 'few to love, and very few to praise.' Not that the poor complained. 'Old and poor people,' as one of them admitted, 'must expect slites from all sortes'; and the law never yet listened to the tales of those in receipt of parish pay. Here as elsewhere they seem to have been as dumb and patient as the animals of the field. If it be true that no class in the world had ever so evil and forlorn a history, for the most part it has gone down into silence. 'We do not quite forgive a giver,' says Emerson; 'the hand that feeds us is in some danger of being bitten.' But not in Hitchin, so far as the records show. The barks and bites were from outside the workhouse, not within. Now and again there would be an outburst against a Master too Draconian in his rule, e.g. '1829. Indictment of Charles Papworth, George Bailey, James Steeley and six others all of Hitchin for that on Jan. 24th they did with force and arms assemble together in the workhouse there and make a Riat' (402. 23). But outside the workhouse the barks and bites came

from every quarter. There were those simple, soft-hearted people who could not bear to see the 'righteous forsaken and his seed begging their bread.' In their view the overseers were niggardly and hard-fisted in their treatment. They reviled them in the market-place as 'open oppressors of poore people.' They quoted against them what Roger North had written in his *Discourse of the Poor*, 1753: 'A short life with less pain were to be preferred to this pining Death with Parish Allowance.'

From the other side the overseers were shot at by the 'pure and blameless ratepayers' in general (the *pay-rishioners* as they were styled), who complained bitterly of their 'giving relief for their own particular ends, of acting with unchecked dishonesty and unrestrained liberality, ordering the money of the industrious and prudent to be frittered away upon the idle and improvident.' The arbitrary and sentimental division of men into 'wanton wealthlinges and untoward poorelings,' was, so they maintained, ridiculous and absurd; one or two, like Whittingstall of West-Mill, had profiteered in the Peninsular War to the extent of fifty or sixty thousand pounds; but the general body of citizens was fast sinking down into 'the poorality of the realm.' In 1817 the Poor Law Commissioners had seriously reported of the agricultural district about Hitchin that those who lived on the rates were better off than the paupers [i.e. the ratepayers] who paid them; and, as they might have added, better housed, too, seeing that the overseers had just purchased the residence of the Lord of the Manor for a workhouse (Poor Law Rep. 1818, 87). Between such opposing views, no wonder the halting overseers walked delicately, and were glad when their year was done. Their heads, never too steadily furnished and often fuddled with wine, could not preserve the difficult equipoise between mercy and maintenance which baffles economists still. So few apprehended the real snare of Poor Law administration lest the seduction of indiscriminate charity should entice the population to lose trust in its own labours, and persuade the man who in the integrity of his heart eats his 'dry but independent crust' to change place with 'clamorous importunity in rags.' Still, they seem to have done what they could and according to their lights. No one dare claim that they 'abounded in the grace of liberality'—no rates will stand the Sermon on the Mount—but 'out of the little poorenesse of the parish purse'

they accomplished something. Each might have urged in his defence what poor Kit Smart once said: 'I have helped according to my willing poverty.' The parochial conscience of the eighteenth century stretched no further than doles and doctoring; one could hardly expect more. After all, what Moses, the first overseer, had enjoined, that they did: 'Thou shalt open thy hand unto thy brother, unto the poor, and to the needy in the land.' The pity of it was they relieved their brother of necessity because the law required it; not with alacrity because he was a brother. Their minds dwelt still in the old dispensation. The new dispensation, that of the rights and the brotherhood of Man, was only then being born in the agony and throes of the French Revolution. Some good folk, even in Hitchin, preached the new doctrine, and recklessly attempted to convert the overseers. In 1795, the darkest year of all (xviii), Samuel Spavold, the Quaker Minister, who had been prophesying the immediate end of the world, had a curious 'concern' to lighten the lot of those appointed to die. He longed for the poor, who would soon stand by the throne of God, to be recognized in this world, too. In a ragged, yellow sheet of paper are still to be seen those lines, copied from an old sermon which he addressed to the overseers—to melt, if happily it might do so, the hardness of their hearts, and show them a more excellent way of dealing with the poor: 'He whose need craves your bounty, whose misery demands your mercy, what is he? He is not truly so mean and sorry a thing as the disguise of misfortune under which he appears doth represent him. He who looks so deformedly and dismally, who to outward sight is so ill bestead and so pitifully accoutred, hath latent in him much of admirable beauty and glory. He whom you behold so dejectedly sneaking, in so despicable a garb, so destitute of all convenience and comfort (lying in the dust, naked or clad with rags, meagre with hunger or pain), he comes of a most high and heavenly extraction; he was born a prince, the son of the greatest King Eternal; he can truly call the sovereign lord of all the world his father. That same forlorn wretch whom we are so apt to despise and trample upon was framed and constituted lord of the visible world; and all the goodly

xviii. Apart from the threat of the spread of the French Revolution into England, this was the year when the Earl of Beverley, who had been lessee of Hitchin Priory, left the town. Joseph Farington, R.A., in his *Diary*, vol. i, p. 70, observes: 'That place will feel the loss of his family as he is supposed to have expended £5,000 a year in that town.'

brightnesses of heaven and all the costly furnitures of earth were created to serve him ' (2. 73).

That must have taken their worships' breath away! A heavenly vision that was not for their dim and downcast eyes; which, even to us, who are so little better than our fathers, seems almost as distant to-day.

COCK STREET IN 1760

From an original pencil study by an unknown artist. British Museum, Add MSS. 32350, fol. 72

THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS (i)

I

F the dim beginnings of the English roads—the tracks of the wild beasts, the drift-ways of the cattle-drovers, the paths that groped through the dark forest from market town to market town—who shall speak with any confidence or to any purpose? Or who shall say of the proud men of Rome which of the thoroughfares they made, and which of the British they merely Romanized beneath the feet of their legions? In the same way there would be little profit in dwelling on the early *surveillance* of the highways before the Statute of 1555, which first appointed surveyors for that end. Such attention as was given beforetime was less for repair than for protection of those who used the roads. When all men went afoot, or rode with pack-horses for their baggage, there was no question of a carriage way, but of 'pack and prime' way only. Fords and bridges were important, to be sure, but what chiefly mattered was protection from the cut-throat plunderers and outlaws who lurked in the bushes by the way. The books of archæology make a great deal of the *trinoda necessitas* and of the ancient common-law obligation of road repair. One hears much of '*murage* and *pavage* and *pontage*,' of the burdens laid upon particular estates *ratione tenuræ*, of bridge and road repair as works of piety that absolved men from their sins. But clearly whatever came of these was fitful and fortuitous. There was no parochial conscience or public endeavour in those early days. So far as safety was concerned, there was of course 'the peace of the four great ways,' in which, standing as it did upon the Icknield Way, the township of Hitchin shared. But the peace was by no means apparent. The 'enormities' seem as frequent here as in the unprotected regions. The chronicler Matthew

i. The rough places of this chapter have been made smooth by the revision of the Right Hon. Sidney Webb and Mrs. Beatrice Webb, whose book, *The Story of the King's Highway*, 1913, is by far the best authority on the subject. I wish to express my gratitude to them.

Paris copies out an order which the King sent in 1260 to Hitchin and the other hundreds of the county, requiring them to guard their roads, 'because frequently and in many places there have been manslaughters, robberies and other outrageous evil-doings (*homicidia et alia maleficia enormia*) in manifest violation of our peace' (148. Add. vi. 212). Evidently it was then as it continued to be for five hundred years until the time when Horace Walpole was writing: 'One has to travel even at noon as if one was going into battle.' Again, in 1327, when the Exchequer Rolls and Domesday Book were being sent from Westminster to York, another order was received for an escort to be found through the Hitchin district with money and provender as well. There was no doubt of its being the King's highway. If he were hindered in his pleasures, someone heard of it soon. '1234. Order to build and repair the bridges in the hundred of Hitchin so that the King with his falcons could freely pass all the rivers there' (53. 12). As for his lieges, they must look after themselves, which they did by way of presentment with varying success. '1354. Presentments by jurors of Hitchin Hundred. 1. That Hugh Raison and John Feverel made a well in the King's road to the peril of persons passing thereby. 2. That the prior of Hertford ought to repair a footbridge at Ickleford which is ruinous. 3. That the Abbess of Elstow ought to make a bridge for carts and horses at Hidemille in the parish of Hitchin which is broken and dangerous' (Anc. Indic. 38. 23). Those things that *ought* to be done generally remained in the subjunctive mood until further notice, for no one seemed to care very much and life was held cheaply in those days. In 1499 a miller dug a clay pit in the highway at Hitchin, ten feet long, eight feet broad and eight feet deep, in which a travelling glove-merchant was drowned one pitch-black night. Yet the local jury acquitted the miller on the ground that he had nowhere else to get the particular clay he needed (53. 15). Certainly it was a good thing when the Church took the roads under its protection, so that 'wayfaring men though fools should not err therein.' All through the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the amending of 'wikked wayes' is being urged upon rich merchants as one of those works of charity they should perform for the salvation of their souls. One may trace the results of this teaching also in the wills which the clergy not infrequently composed for illiterate or dying

testators (ii). Thus Sir John Sturgeon of this parish in the year 1492 bequeathed 'XLs. towards the reparations of the lane leading from Tilehouse Street unto the buttes, so that the same shall be repaired with stones wel and sufficiently.' One may note in passing that it was a common thing for these bequests to be limited to that section of the highway by which the deceased in his lifetime had been more particularly annoyed. Thus Richard Handeleye, 1534, gives 'XLs. to the reparacion of the lane about Colyns in Tylehouse streate'; John Kitlynge, 1552, gives 'Xs. towards the mendyng of the lane that goeth to Beryfeld'; and John Warner, 1558, gives '20s. unto the mendinge of the highe waye between Berton and Silver Streate.' Others are more catholic in their charity. John Smyth, 1521, says: 'I will ther be laide a 100 lode of stones in the high wayes where most neds is'; and Margerie Astrye, 1524, gives a dole 'to the mending of all those foule wayes most in nede of mendynge within 20 miles of London,' and, curiously enough, she appoints a hermit, enclosed in a cell at Islington, to see that the work is properly done. After the first quarter of the sixteenth century, however, the Church was too much occupied in saving its own soul to have much thought for anything else; and laymen, however piously inclined, had little money to spare. It was high time someone else shouldered the burden. Moreover, Hitchin was becoming an important centre of communication and the roads needed more attention. 'It is a great parish of people,' says a chantry certificate of 1552, 'to the number of 1000 and above of houseling people. And also it is a great thoroughfare' (178).

II

At last, by Philip and Mary's *Statute for the Mending of the Highwayes*, 1555, some method was superimposed by the State upon this chaos of road repair. After reciting that the highways were 'both very noisom and tedious to travel in and dangerous to all passengers and carriages,' the statute required the Constables and Churchwardens to assemble and consult with the parishioners in Easter Week every year, and to appoint two honest persons as surveyors or orderers of the highways,

ii. The references to the wills that follow are set out in the Bibliography (427).

who were to set apart four days upon which the parishioners should appear; those holding plough-lands in tillage or pasture with their teams, and ordinary householders with shovels, spades, picks, mattocks and other tools and instruments, there to labour for eight consecutive hours. The surveyors were to direct the work, to levy penalties on the defaulters, and collect commutation money from those who preferred to avoid personal service.

Here, as elsewhere, the statute was slow to resolve itself into common usage. With mechanical precision the surveyors were appointed, but they seem to have conspired with the people to do the bare minimum of what the Act enjoined. Certainly they took their duties lightly: 'Spent at bowling-alley where we chose new Wardens for the Highwayes, 3s.' In a perfunctory way and on a printed form they go on reporting to the Justices at Quarter Sessions that the highways are amended; but one knows from the complaints that they are not. As John Norden, the first historian of the county, writing in 1598, observed, 'The Hundred of Hitchin is very apt to yeeld derty wayes' (6. 1). But the aptness was due less to the heavy soil than to the light and lazy work of the inhabitants. The truth was blurted out by a contemporary writer: 'The rich do so cancel their portions, and the poor so loiter in their labours, that of all the six scarcely two good days' work are performed; sometimes also these days' works are not employed upon those wayes that lead from market to market, but each Surveyor amendeth such bye-plots and lanes as seem best for his own commodity and easy passage unto his fields and pastures' (iii).

In the early part of the seventeenth century the frequent residence of James I and Charles I at Royston brought some good to the neighbourhood by reason of the extra attention paid on their account to the condition of the roads: '1632. His Majesty being to take his journey to Royston and Newmarket, the whole county of Hertford is hereby enjoined to repair the ways' (Cal. S.P.D. Chas. I, vol. 222, No. 63). The local magistrates, being informed that it was the great wagons going from Hitchin and Royston to London that tore up the roads, ordered malt during the winter months to be conveyed on pack-horses, but they were simply laughed at by the rich

iii. *Vide* Wm. Harrison's *Description of England*, printed in 1587.

and powerful trade. In 1647 the justices are still feebly protesting: 'If the Maltsters would carry lighter loads with only four horses as they used to, and each person would duly perform his works, the ways could be sufficiently amended' (72. 1. 86).

As against the weakness of those in authority, one is glad to notice an increasing vigilance on the part of the parishioners themselves in manor-court assembled. Throughout the Commonwealth and later seventeenth century this is especially marked, though the emphasis is placed not so much upon the amendment of the highways as upon the removal of those obstructions that incommode or molest the traveller; everything, to use the phrase of an eighteenth-century reformer, 'that prevents the roads from growing better of themselves.' So Thomas Paternoster of Hitchin, stationer, is presented for placing a cartload of firewood in Angell Street (now Sun Street) 'prejudishall to His Majesty's Highway' (72. 2. 70). It is found necessary in 1697 to order that 'noe person or persons shall at any time hereafter digg any sand out of the causeway or streets of Hitchin' (162. 41). The millers are a constant cause of offence: '1677. Presentment of Edward Prier for not scouring his watercourse before his door in Porte-Mill Lane' (72. 1. 279); '1680. Presentment made against Edward Papworth of Ippolletts, miller, for keeping up the water and letting it down in great quantities, so that it overflows the meads, highways and houses of Hitchin' (72. 1. 30). Of encroachments there is no end. The strips of roadside waste are a temptation to any tenant. '1671: Presentment of Amos Huckleberry for that he has hedged and ditched-in part of the common fayring-way' (162. 42); '1653: Presentment that John Dirmer did pull up a style standing in a certain close called Pinkarde, being in the market common foot-pathway leading from Hitchin to Luton, and did set up an oven in the place where the said style had stood' (72. 1. 103). Obstructions also abound, e.g. of farmers who 'thwart the common highway with a cawsey,' or neglect to cut the hedges 'which do hang over the highway and become a nuisance to the King's subjects,' or make a dunghill in the road itself, e.g. 1684: 'Wee the inhabitens of Langley Hamlat doth wittnes that William Bonn hath carred his Dungell a way whitch hee layde in the Kinge's hie way and the plase is good wheare he layde itt' (iv).

iv. This from the Herts Quarter Session Rolls is worth citing, not only to show that those in the hamlets could spell even worse than those in the

Now and again there is some concern about the actual condition of the roads apart from questions of encroachment or obstruction: 'Presentment of Thomas Kilbye, Lawrence Tristram and Joseph Dellowe for not gathering stones to amend the streets according to the order made for the purpose.' For a time that excellent custom was re-established by which townsmen were made to sweep and clean up the street in front of their houses every Saturday before the sun went down. Even cleanliness is regarded: tenants are fined for 'suffering their ducks to run over the town, dirting the paths and the ponds.' Another entry reads: 'We present the handle of the pump opposite Hogday's premises.'

As might be expected, a good many complaints centre about the market-place, and there seems to have been some doubt whether the town or the owner of the market was liable for its repair. In 1662 the Court Leet contended 'that the Bailiffes of the market for the time being did always amend the market-place with Gravell and stones so farr as they received money for stallage and pickage' (162. 44). The Court presented, but the Bailiff discourteously dissented. He will see them to the devil, or rather to Hertford and back, before he produces any accounts; and as for the aforesaid market-place, 'it is sufficiently done as ever it was,' with which they had to content themselves until the statute of 1690, which empowered them to levy toll upon every load of hay that was drawn into the market and to apply the proceeds to its paving (2 Wm. and Mary c. 8). Though worsted in some important affairs like this, the Court Leet could be strict enough on trifles. It was reasonable enough they should in 1680 'present the hamlet of Walsaw (i.e. Walsworth) for not repairing the causey over the common there, which is the Church way and the market way' (72. 1. 301); but it seems queer that they should have troubled themselves and their neighbours 'to repair the common footway leading from Hitchin to Much Hadham,' over twenty miles away; or fine their poor tenants for not making up a

town, but as an example of procedure. The presentments against this dunghill were originally made in the Court Leet. Bonn was fined there twice, but would neither pay nor abate the nuisance. Whereupon he was presented to Quarter Sessions, and the justices soon reduced him to a humbler frame of mind. The certificate of abatement above quoted is signed by two surveyors of the highway; the only other 'inhabetent' present was Bonn's brother (402. 24).

porallus; or *purilly* way (a word derived from the French *pour aller*), used only on Rogation days in the perambulation of the parish.

III

This vigilance on the part of the copyholders seems to have continued until about 1720, when at long last the surveyors felt capable of assuming full control. Their books of account begin in 1727, and give the student a very graphic idea of road administration in the Georgian days (v). Rough and ready it certainly was, and as for the surveyors, one must admit they deserved a good many of the stones that contemporary writers hurled at them. The learned Dr. Burn hits them off shrewdly in one line: 'Those spiritless, ignorant, lazy, sauntering people called Surveyors of Highways' (456. 38). 'Most often,' writes another, rather unfairly, as if the office were a profitable concern, 'they are the incompetent relations of prominent parishioners.' How they could be other than incompetent it is hard to see; in one year's apprenticeship they had no chance to learn the job. If one of the farmers took it on, in the grumbling but on the whole good-tempered sort of way characteristic of that class, something would get done, at least in the neighbourhood of his own holding. But to let a shopkeeping, town-bred surveyor run amuck upon the King's highway was to ask for trouble. As another road-reformer said: 'Before this officer is half master of his business, he is discharged and a fresh ignoramus chosen' (456. 40). To anyone reading through the depressing account of surveyors in general, contained in Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *The Story of the King's Highway*, 1913, it is clear that the Hitchin Surveyors were well above the average in ability and attention to their work. As many as four are appointed every Easter, one for each of the wards, and in 1752 a separate waywarden is instituted 'for the Hamblett, Inship or Precinct of Walshoe,' one of the muddiest places on

v. For the reference to whatever is quoted in this chapter from the six volumes of the Accounts of the Surveyors of Highways at Hitchin, described in the Bibliography (431), and from the Order Books, Minute Books and Accounts of the two Turnpike Trusts, described in No. 436, it has been considered sufficient to give the year. For the Surveyors' Accounts the student can, if needful, consult the Epitome and Index (234), pp. 47–51, where many of the items quoted in this chapter are set out in full.

God's earth (vi). To supplement or correct whatever notion of road-mending they might possess, a 'Book of Instructions for the new Servaers' was ordered and kept for future use; this was William Mather's manual *Of Repairing and Mending the Highways*, first printed in 1696. As a Quaker, Mather was well known in the Hitchin Meeting, and as a road officer at Bedford his advice was frequently sought. It was due to his merciful suggestion that the Hitchin surveyors took to relieving the poor cottage people from their six days' statute labour, allowing their children as substitutes to pick up stones in the fields (vii). 'Paid Richard Farey's boys for picking stones after the plow, 3s.': 'Paid 3 companies of stone-pickers, 30 lads, £2 5s.: Paid scuttles for stone gathering, 1s. 2d.': 'For beer for the children when they went stone picking, 4s.'—small beer as one may hope. They went to Mather also as a matter of course when labourers were needed for the roads, 'such,' to use his own words, 'as will be industrious for their hire, not such as are commonly called "The King's Loyterers" who work when they list, come and go at their pleasure, and spend most of their time in standing still and prating or asking passengers for largesse' (456. 29).

It was highly important for the surveyors to seek out efficient workmen, for the statute labour of the parishioners was shamefully scamped, the six days set apart for this becoming as time went on a sort of public holiday. The rich people, the professionals and women owners of course paid a composition in lieu of labour on the road, with amounts varying from 8s. to 1s. 6d.; in 1754 there were as many as fifty-one. What further money the surveyors required was got from the 'gathering rate for the repairing, mending and widening of the highways,' first at 3d. in the pound, which in 1727 brought only £34, later at 4d., and towards the end of the century at 6d. On one occasion the receipts were luckily increased by a windfall 'from a stranger that was killed upon the rode,' whose pockets yielded as much as £3 7s. 4d. (viii). When, as sometimes hap-

vi. As may be inferred from the ironical choice of seafaring names for the beer-houses there, e.g. The Ship, The Sailor Boy, The Anchor; and from the field names of the hamlet also, e.g. 'Sea-Shott, Wade-over Close, Puddle Acre.'

vii. In the neighbouring parish of Toddington it was resolved, 'that poor persons having more than two children be excused the highway rate.'

viii. By Common Law travellers were to be deemed parishioners of any parish through which they passed.

pened, the rate proved insufficient or an emergency arose, the 'substantialest of the inhabitants' had a whip round to cover the expense, e.g. in 1765: 'Received gifts for mending the road in Back Street.' Some gave a day's work; the parson gave a pound and lent his team of horses; the squire made up the deficit. The Quakers were always willing to lend a hand, though they preferred to do so not in mixed company, but by themselves and in their peculiar way. '1767. To Quakers at the River, 2s. 6d.' The ordinary people were less particular, and would do anything for the remote chance of a drink. Once in 1754, when the surveyor's team of horses failed, twenty-three men volunteered to pull the plough themselves for 3d. apiece and beer.

It is perhaps needful to explain that in pre-Macadam days the surveyor's usual method of repair was to collect six or eight powerful horses in the spring, plough up the surface of the road, casting the furrows towards the centre, and finally harrow to a level for the summer traffic. In the late autumn they would plough again more deeply; make a good bottom of faggots for draining; then clap on soil, bricks and gravel, with flints on the top of all. The accounts show the cost of this item by item. The faggots, for example, were cut at Gosmore at the charge of one penny the bundle. The gravel came from the bed of the river or from the pits at Mount Pleasant and the Riddy. '1755. Paid for digging 26 loads of sand out of the river 5s.; Paid for beer for the men 5s.'; '1770. Paid Stapleton for digging 60 load of Gravel at the Riddy £1,' i.e. 4d. the load. Other items for 'screaning' (i.e. sifting) gravel and 'calendaring the gravel pit' (i.e. raking it down smooth) frequently recur. For roadmen tenpence a day was the customary wage, and twopence more with drink if they worked in the river: '1731. Paid for Gin for men in the water, 6d.' If the job had to be done against time or working overtime, an extra sum was allowed: 'Given to the shovell men to drinke to encourage them to work hard, 1s. 6d.; Pade 7 men for working overhours, 1s. 2d.; Paide to the roadmen overplush, 3s. 4d.' For the hire of a horse and cart the surveyors paid 4s. a day, or with two horses 7s. 2d.

IV

The stones which the surveyors or 'stonewardens' 'bestowed upon the highway' were collected partly by the gangs of children above mentioned, partly from the Priory ruins: '1785. Paid for stones in the cloisters, 1s. 6d.,' and perhaps most of all from the shallow stream at Wellhead. Whatever the farmers sent in was paid for at sixpence a load, any surplus being stored up against the following winter: '1753. Paid Mr. Thomas's men for flinging up stones at the Grove gate, 6d.' No labour was wasted in breaking up the stones; the biggest boulders were tossed into the deepest ruts; the wagons soon wore them smooth. Indeed, nothing that was bulky or durable seemed to come amiss. The surveyors here were not quite so undiscriminating as the surveyor of Barkway, a dozen miles away, who broke up the church font to make the road's foundation. But when the eastern corner of our Market Square was excavated in 1895 thick layers of bullock horns were found forming the foundation of the road (ix). By the Brand Street corner the skeleton of a horse was discovered fully harnessed, one that had probably met with an accident there and been buried where it lay with just a covering of earth. The road surface was generally compacted of sand and gravel and the smaller stones: '1775. Paid for a heap of pebbles, 2s. 6d.'; the Market Square and Bancroft being dignified with cobbles, or 'petrified kidneys,' as they were called, at 2½d. the bushel.

So long as men kept to the middle of the road and the middle of the town and the middle of the year, the going was passably good; but in the mud-bound winter the outskirts of the parish, the 'precinct and inship of Walshoe,' the outlying hamlets of Preston and Langley, were hardly to be reached. Over two centuries one can still faintly hear the pitiful complaints of such as 'were weary of this deepe dertie country life,' eked out at the further end of impassable lanes; filthy thoroughfares through which none might fare, 'the soil,' as one farmer says, 'being such as the winter devours whatsoever we are able to lay on in the summer.' There is a petition in

ix. At the same place in 1852 part of a medieval pilgrim's staff was dug up with this inscription rudely carved upon it: '*Haec dirigat mey* [*sic*] *iter*—This shall direct my way' (448).

the year 1726 of 160 Hitchin people complaining bitterly of the parish ways: 'So very bad and ruinous are they and so narrow that the waggoners cannot in some parts go on the outside of the cart rutts, whereby several dismal accidents have lately happened' (x) (430). On January 5, 1708, Sir John Spencer, of Offley Place, writes to his brethren on the Hitchin bench to say: 'I have not been able to goe down to Hitchin in my charriot, firstly because I am confined to my chamber by the gout and it is with great difficulty that I can creep down into my parlour, and secondly our wayes are almost impracticable' (402. 25). Hale, of King's Walden, was reduced to attending the magistrates' meeting in a one-wheel cart of his own inventing, made so as to go between the ruts; this for a hundred years was the wonder and envy of the country-side. When Benedict Ithell, of Temple Dinsley, sent to London to have a carriage made, he was asked by the makers to give the width of the ruts in his part of the country, as they would then frame the wheels precisely that width apart (87. 2). Items for 'pecking in the rutts' occur on page after page, but the money would seem to have been wasted. They were soon as bad as ever. The eccentric Captain Hinde, of Preston Castle, being beleaguered every winter by the badness of the roads, sulked within his fortress and issued angry proclamations: '1767. November. To Mr. Bradley. Sir, I find you are Surveyor of the Roads, and I must not only desire but insist that you will directly give orders that the roads leading to Hitchin may be made passable which at present they are not. I was in the most iminent danger of being overturned the last time I went to Hitchin, which prevents my going ever to Church' (438). On another occasion, when declining an invitation to dine at Hitchin Priory, he blames Mr. Radcliffe's forbears for the tortuous, pitch-dark and perilous tracks to Preston, which made it impossible except for highwaymen to venture out at night; and he concludes by firing at him Sir William Davenant's gibe: 'Sure your ancestors contrived our narrow lanes in the days

x. Of the deaths recorded in the Coroner's Returns for Hertfordshire in the eighteenth century, a considerable proportion has to be ascribed to falls from carts and coaches and wagons. Some of these, no doubt, should be attributed to the effect of alcohol. It was the custom to keep a flagon of strong ale on our Hitchin coach for the entertainment of the passengers, and under its influence some of the 'outsides' lost their balance and their lives.

of wheelbarrows before those greater engines, carts, were invented' (2. 75).

It was due to Hinde's persistent complaints more than anything else that a paid officer was appointed to supervise the 'Supervisors of the Highwayes.' The Webbs, in the book above cited, say that they have met with no instance during the eighteenth century in which a salaried officer was provided. Well, here is one, and a very remarkable one, seeing that the appointment is fourteen years before the statute of 1766, which first authorized the provision of paid officials, and then only if two-thirds of the ratepayers agreed. The Hitchin accounts show that in 1752 a book was purchased for Thomas Surety, in which he was to enter up the details of the labour on the roads; and the following year the justices agreed to allow him a salary of four guineas to direct and oversee the work. If the accounts are any guide, the new broom swept pretty clean. There begin to be items of 'swepyn the streets,' and 'castinge sande about the wayes' in frosty weather, and 'caryng away of myre.' The 'gutter in the ffish-markett' that had leaked for years was looked to and repaired. One hears of ditching at 4d. a pole, and 'scouring of offensive ponds.' Land is purchased for widening at several dangerous corners. 'Way posts,' 'Index Posts,' 'Pointers,' or 'Posts for Directions,' are set up at the cross roads: 'Timber for the way post at 15d. per foot, 12s. 1d.: Paid Pearson's man a day making it, 1s. 8d.: More cutting the letters, 6d.: Colouring the post, 2s.: Beere to the carpenters when putting the post down near Walso, 6d.' 'Ordered that a Globular Lamp be set on the top of the Way Post to be erected at the corner of Pound Lane.' A dozen willow trees are bought at eighteen pence apiece to make whelms (i.e. half of a hollow tree laid under a gateway for a drain). Care is taken to 'lay the hippin stones anew' in the stream at Wellhead (xi). A bright new wheelbarrow is acquired for 8s.—no sooner bought than stolen: 'Paid Cutter crying the wheelbarrow, 6d.'

Along with these innovations one observes a sharp reform of many abuses of the old régime. In the first year of the new officer's appointment there is quite a lot of time and money expended on 'summoning those that had not done their duty.'

xi. Hipping stones = heavy boulders placed in a brook so that wayfarers might cross over without getting wet.

LORENZO DE MUDICI, THE ROAD-SWEEPER OF HITCHIN

From a pen-and-ink sketch by Samuel Lucas, *circa* 1840. The real name of the roadman was Lawrence

Notice is given in church, 'after sermon ended,' of 'defaults and annoyances,' the offenders being allowed thirty days in which to amend the same, after which time the Surveyors themselves would put the matter right and charge the cost to the defaulter. Another evil custom which the surveyors aforetime had winked at came to a sudden end: 'Notice is hereby given to the inhabitants to remove their timber or other wood out of the streets, causeways or highways belonging to this township directly; otherwise they will be prosecuted as the law directs.' Obstructions vanish, overhanging hedges disappear, ruts are raked in with iron rakes, till one fine day and for the first time in history the justices are able to certify of a Hitchin road that 'it is commodious and safe for horse and carte and man.' As for the lanes in the hamlets, not quite so much can be said. But the officers of Preston report: 'Wee have made sarch a corden [i.e. according] as owr ofes [i.e. office] requires and find all things well. As for highwayes they are passable.' At Langley they are more than passable: 'Travellers and their cattle and carriages may pass without the least hasard or danger' (402. 26 & 27).

Accidents, however, will happen on the best regulated roads, and one meets with many in these books of account: '1758. Paid Pryor and also others for helping get a horse up that was cast in the bad way in Walso road, 6d.'; '1810. Paid Wm. Sexton's widow, her husband being killed in the road at Moor Mead, £1. 1. 0.' The gravel pits also are the cause of many disasters: '1739. Paid 4 men digging John Bryant out of the gravel and carrying home, 1s. 6d.; Paid Mr. Toler the coroner for John Bryant, 15s. 0d.' 'Smothered in the sand pit' is the entry in the register of burials.

V

That unpleasant part of their duties which concerned 'all things noisome to the health of man and hurtful to the body of the commonwealth' the Surveyors resigned at the first opportunity in favour of their paid assistant. For some obscure reason the honourable calling of Scavenger, or Town's Husband, as it was vulgarly styled, had never been sought after as eagerly as it should have been by public-spirited people. Those in authority had pointed out in extenuation that, though it was a

lowly office, it led on to higher things. As one of Massinger's characters observed, 'He who is thought worthy to be scavenger in time may rise to be overseer of the poor.' With a town like Hitchin, so ancient and evil-smelling, it ought of itself to have been a full-time job. But the standards of decency were deplorably degraded, and the sense of smell appears to have been altogether lost. 'Amersements [i.e. fines] about stinkes' in the early manor-rolls are very few and far between. With sixpence in your hand you could go to the steward of the manor in 1659 and actually get 'a licence to make a Dunghill in Bucklersbury,' though later on, when things were a little more respectable, proceedings were begun against the bailiff of Hitchin 'for making a great Dunghill in the market place to the great annoyance of the inhabitants living near it' (162. 44 & 45). One is glad to see that 4d. is paid to George Hetterly in 1670 'for giving notice that none lay any more dounge in the Churchyard' (162. 46), for, throughout the Commonwealth, upon the corruptible they had been heaping further corruption in the way of road-sweepings, garbage and manure; and in the Civil War the tower of the church had been made to serve as a stable (2. 76, 77).

As soon as the 'sallarried' officer is upon the scene, some dim imaginings of sanitation come to shape. One reads of 'collekterers of the scavenger' going upon their rounds with 'night-carts,' carrying the abominations of the parish well away to the 'Dirt-House' on the Bedford Road (where the New Inn now stands). Fines are levied upon such as 'make middings [dunghills] before their houses to the great undecencie and hurt of their neighbours.' Visits are paid to those who exercise the trade of a Tallow Chandler in such a way as to emit 'an intolerable stench and smell.' The farmers are warned about their 'unruly and unlawful sowes that range abroad in the streets.' These things and more are done. But for a long time yet, what with open sewers, tan-yards and shambles in the heart of the town, ruinous causeys and fords across the river, and cobbles that run loose upon the road, it has to be said of Hitchin, as was said of Edinburgh in 1773, 'it was pretty perilous and a good deal odoriferous.' But the informations, the presentments gradually grow less; the townsmen are not so habitually 'pestered and annoyed,' and there is no severe visitation of plague after 1772.

We may as well leave the Scavenger at the Dirt House, and stroll back to Hitchin along the Bedford Road. How wonderfully improved it is, and just look at this fantastic pepper-box of a house at Burford Dray and these wooden barriers across the road, and across the side roads also to Westmill and Ickleford! What does it all mean?

Well, it means the Turnpike road has come at last. It had been threatening a long time. To find any single or certain beginning of a system so capriciously evolved and gradually applied would be possible only by letting one's ingenuity run away with one's reason. But the Webbs and other level-headed historians of the King's Highway have been inclined to trace the new departure in the conduct of the principal roads, and the germ of the new policy that those who use a thing should pay for it, to the petition of the little village of Radwell, lying seven miles distant from Hitchin. This tiny community, 'a parish so small that it has only two teams,' had for a long time been chafing under the burden of making good the damage caused, not by local use, but by the continually increasing traffic of the public at large along the Great North Road, which, unfortunately, ran for two miles within the parish bounds. At their wits' end, the Surveyors appealed to Quarter Sessions in 1656, declaring they could do no more and would not if they could. The justices evidently saw that an important question of principle was at stake, and, after consulting with the Quarter Sessions of the neighbouring counties, represented to Parliament that 'by reason of the great and many loads which are drawn in waggons and the great trade of barley and malt, the ordinary course appointed by all former laws and statutes of this realm is not sufficient for the effectual repairing of the roads.' The House of Commons pondered over the problem for some time, and then decided to try at Wadesmill (Herts), Caxton (Cambridgeshire), and Stilton (Huntingdonshire) the experiment of erecting gates and levying tolls for the regulation of the main highways—an experiment which proved so successful that special Acts for a like purpose were soon being applied for in every part of England (456. 114–15).

It was by a statute of 1757 that the Hitchin, Shefford and Bedford Turnpike Trust was established for the customary period of twenty-one years with provisos for renewal (434). The statute itself follows the common form: authorizing the

erection of toll-bars, toll-houses, and side-gates, the widening or sale of the old roads and the making of new; specifying the tolls to be levied and the exemptions in favour of agricultural, parliamentary, military and religious persons. For 'putting in execution all the powers in and by the act given and granted,' all the big-wigs and notables of the neighbourhood are appointed as trustees, their names being set forth in due order of birth or consequence. At the top of the list glitter the titles of the Marquis of Tavistock, the Earl of Upper Ossory in the Kingdom of Ireland, James Cecil, Viscount Cranborne, and Philip Yorke, 'commonly called Viscount Royston.' They are deferentially attended by the Esquires: Whitbread of Southill, Lytton of Knebworth, Salusbury of Offley, Burgoyne of Sutton, Osborne of Chicksands Priory, Pym of Letchworth, Hale of King's Walden, the redoubtable Robert Hinde of Preston Castle, Bogdani of Charlton, and Radcliffe of Hitchin Priory. They in their turn are obsequiously followed by the Gentlemen and Clerks, amongst whose names one catches sight of farmers like John Lucas, Joseph Ransom, William Hanscombe, George Hailey, and Charles Baron; doctors like John Midwinter; bankers like Joseph Margets Pierson; and Clerks in Holy Orders like John Pilkington Morgan of Hitchin and Edward Young (who wrote what Cobbett called 'that bombasticall stuff called *Night Thoughts*'), then Rector of Welwyn.

The first reference to the new authority in the Surveyors' Accounts is on August 17, 1757: 'To John Lyle for a list of the parish duty for the use of the Turnpike Commissioners, 4s.'; and another item of 'swearing to the Servitude' apparently relates to the same thing. Under the Act the Turnpike trustees could require part of the six days' service to be performed on their section of the parish roads, a provision which caused endless friction between the two sets of officials. In 1778 there is an ingenious 'proposal of the inhabitants of Hitchin to take upon themselves the repairing of a part of the road in the Town of Hitchin in lieu of their duty paid to the Turnpike.' The trustees would not agree, and so one hears of further 'meetings to consult about the Turnpike Road,' and 'meetings to settle the book according to the late act of parliament.' Now at the Carriers' Arms, now at the Three Tuns, the rivals endeavour to quench their differences in drink, with the result that confusion is worse confounded. The war of words com-

monly ended in a wrangle at the vestry, for which, according to a contemporary account, the surveyors of both sides fortified themselves with brimming jorums of brandy and water, the charge being discreetly disguised in the lump sum for 'way-wardens' expenses,' or sympathetically allowed by their boon companion, the auditor: 'Item payd for a bever for the auditor, 8s. 6d.'

VI

Local jealousies notwithstanding, the Turnpike system slowly approved itself. A few stubborn farmers professed themselves content with the roads of their forefathers and opposed the working of the Act; again and again one finds presentments against them 'for making a hayestacke in the common way.' One of the wagoners is reported to have said: 'Give me but a five feet width in a lane and all the rest may go to the Devil.' But most people, certainly most wagoners, were delighted to watch and to lend a hand in the improvement of their roads. A blind man could soon tell when he was upon a 'turnpike'; as an adjective it was rightly used in the way of commendation. The side roads were still as Arthur Young had described them, 'vile, execrably vile.' Once you got beyond the common fields of the town, the drift lanes were almost impassable; you could only call them roads by an extravagant courtesy. In 1767 the Hitchin parish was being indicted for its highways: 'Expenses to London after the indictment of the road, £1 1s.'; then and frequently afterwards it was fined for gross neglect of repair. But not then nor ever in respect of its Turnpike roads. Of these latter there was soon an extension, a trust being re-created by statute in 1763 for the Hitchin to Welwyn road (xii) (437), and in 1769 for the road from Hitchin through Dunstable to Tring. What with the three trusts, there were gates at Henlow, at Ickleford, at Lilley, at Langley, Monk's Bottom and Lemsford; and, to the astonishment of the natives, milestones, 'of substantial Heart of Oak properly painted,' began to spring up beside the King's highway: '1770. Paid Thomas Paternoster for measuring the roads, £1 1s.' Evidently

xii. The Act creating the Hitchin and Welwyn Trust was passed in 1726; but it does not appear to have been carried out until the Act of 1763 was passed 'to continue and render it more effectual.'

those who ran the Turnpikes knew the way to go about their business. For one thing, the surveyors took full advantage of their statutory power to dig for gravel, chalk, stone and flints upon the waste of the manor and common lands of the town, 'without paying anything for the same.' With the materials so obtained they filled in the yawning chasms of the ruts, and eventually made something of a surface. For another thing, the wagoners were closely supervised. The clerk saw to that, for he, as a man of law, assumed to understand the endless enactments passed to prevent the highways being galled and gashed by wheels. It took some understanding; for, every other year, there would be an amending statute, varying the breadth of the wheel or the form of its rim, the position of the felloe, the spokes or the axle, the space between each pair of wheels, or the respective lines of draught between the back wheels and the front: '1786. Certificate of the conviction of Joshua Bewley for drawing on the turnpike road between Hitchin and Welwyn a waggon with nine horses, having the felloes of the wheels of the breadth of nine inches only' (xiii) (72. 2. 106 *b*). These pettifogging enactments by which the Government was continually putting its spoke into the wheels of the wagons were much abused at the time, but undoubtedly some good ensued from this careful regulation of the traffic. At any rate, the highways were taken in hand for the second time instead of being left 'to grow better of themselves.'

After the untrained, dilatory and irresponsible service of the parish surveyors of a century before, the thoroughness of the Turnpike system at its inception is good to see. In the accounts of the Hitchin and Bedford trust, most carefully kept and as carefully preserved, one can follow with ease the work that goes on day by day. The two surveyors or padlers, John Bury and James Clearson, appointed in 1761, divide the strip of road between them, and make clear-headed and suggestive reports to the quarterly meetings of the Trustees, held alternately at the 'Sun' in Hitchin and the 'Chequers' in Clifton. Individual Trustees are asked to confer with the surveyors between meetings, and make sure that the repairs in their own neighbourhood are carried through. If an official grows lax, a

xiii. Parliament went on making the felloes wider and wider, until they had compulsorily effected a kind of rolling of the roads with nineteen inches of metal (457).

committee is appointed 'to supervise the Surveyor.' If, on the other hand, he proves a faithful and hard-working servant, he is not allowed to want: '1795. Resolved that the Treasurer pay John Marshall a gratuity of 3 guineas to assist him in keeping his horse on account of the present dearness of provisions.' Good surveyors were scarce, but common labourers could be picked up anywhere. A worthless crew in the main, and altogether too low-minded to respond to encouragement. They needed to be driven like slaves. '1792. Resolved that no more beer be allowed to Laborers of any description, who work upon or for the road.'

A good deal of trouble arises with the keepers of the turnpike gates, an unprofitable race of men who are constantly being complained of as uncivil; though in the opinion of the well-born trustees that was reprehensible only when the nobility and gentry were concerned. At almost every meeting a keeper is dismissed, or made to send an apology, or is transferred to another toll-gate out of the sight of the offended person. But one must admit that their office was not an easy one. Hardly a week goes by without someone being charged with 'assaulting them in the execution of their office as toll-gatherer, and refusing to pay the toll, and endeavouring to defraud the Trust of the said Toll.' Here, word for word, is the information laid against two Jews, who, as they drove back from Hitchin Market one Tuesday in 1814, conducted themselves after this characteristic manner on the King's Highway: 'Thomas Moreton, keeper of the Spellbrooke Turnpike Gate, states that about 6 o'clock in the evening of Tuesday, 27th July, Joshua and Harry Phillips came up to the gate which was locked; upon which he opened it, but before they went through he demanded his toll. They refused paying, alledging that they had paid; whereupon Moreton sayd "Produce your ticket." They then replied, "We have paid at the other gate." Moreton enquired at what gate, but they could not tell; they were going towards London in a one Horse Chaise. Moreton told them they should not go till he had received his toll which was 6d. They then whipped their horse and Joshua whipped the prosecutor, and gave the reins to Harry. He then jumped out and sayd "You'll hold my horse, will you?" Moreton replied, "I don't want to hold your horse, but I insist on having my toll, or you produce a ticket." Immediately afterwards, Joshua struck

Moreton in the face, which blow Moreton returned, after which Joshua paid the toll and sayd: "Now you scoundrel, I will thrash you as long as I can," and immediately began to square with his fists doubled and struck a blow at Moreton, which he parried and gave him a blow in return. Harry then came up and made an effort to knock Moreton down with the end of his whip, and would certainly have done so had not Moreton's wife persuaded him to go into the Turnpike House. Then Joshua pulled up a large Flint stone and was in the act of throwing it at Moreton when Moreton's wife pushed her husband into the house and said to Joshua "You shall not throw it at him, but throw it at me if you like." After this, Elizabeth Moreton, daughter of the prosecutor, saw both the Phillips go to the chaise, and take something from under the seat, and return with it to the door of the Turnpike House; on which Moreton's wife sayd "Do you mean to murder him?" Upon which one of the Phillips sayd "Poh." They then got into the chaise and drove off' (xiv).

The farmers alongside the road were another source of trouble. The Clerk, Lawrence Times (xv), is continually writing to them about the plashing or dubbing (trimming) of hedges and the scouring of their ditches; and they actually have to be told in 1767 'that the Trustees will not permit farmers to plow across the Turnpike road.' It is because the farmers were always quarrelling with the gate-keepers over matters of simple addition that the trustees have to 'put up small gates at the Turnpikes for the purpose of numbering droves of sheep going through.' And again, it is because of the farmers' accommodation roads, so often devoted to the accommodation of their friends, that the trustees have to ask Parliament for power 'to make them lock those field-gates which adjoin the road and so prevent persons evading the tolls.' The townspeople likewise are made to feel the authority of the beneficently autocratic trustees. Though the trustees had no

xiv. I discovered this lively incident of Turnpike life amongst the Herts Quarter Sessions Rolls (vol. for 1814, No. 173); but it is not recorded in Hardy's *Notes and Extracts* from the same. It shows once more the value of consulting originals wherever possible. This is but one of many rewards I received for spending a year of Saturdays poring over one hundred and fifty gigantic volumes in manuscript of the county records.

xv. From first to last, four generations of the Times family served this trust as clerk: Lawrence, Daniel, Charles, and William Onslow Times.

BRIDGE STREET IN 1895

jurisdiction as trustees over the roads outside their trust, they had, many of them, authority as magistrates over the parish surveyors; and one finds them exerting this to the full in the endeavour to bring the parish roads up to the Turnpike standard. Their orders from the Bench are the orders of men who have learnt elsewhere the art and craft of road-mending, and throw no little light on the methods then in vogue. '1810. Special Sessions at the Cock Inn. It is ordered that the Hitchin Surveyors shall forthwith repair Bancroft Street by picking up the materials to a proper depth, screening or sifting out and carrying away the soft part of the soil, and laying the stones, properly covered with gravel, in angular convex form, which should be raised as nearly as may be of the height of the foot way.' And again: '1817. Special Sessions at the Sun. Ordered that the Surveyors of Preston hamlet shall repair the highway between Preston Green and Dead Woman's Lane by raising the same in the center with stones, and by making drains on each side to carry off the water with a trunk [i.e. whelm] across and under the road into the drain passing through the close of Sir Francis Willes called the Long Mead' (442).

To the enlightened energy of these trustees must also be attributed those schemes of town improvement which parish officers as a class were always so slow to conceive. Thus, in 1829, and despite the protests of the churchwardens, the Market Square was cleared of the Bell House, Manor-Court House and Middle Row on the ground that they incommoded the traffic. The posts and chains, erected by manorial licence to give a dignified appearance to copyhold tenements, were condemned as obstructions; whilst innkeepers were ordered to remove the signboards that swung perilously above the causeways and caught in the high-laden carts. When property was wanted for widening at Bridge Street, 1831, Pound Lane, 1834, and Butts Close corner, 1834, the owners were sent for and told by the trustees exactly what they would be paid and forbidden to ask for more (xvi). Those who refused to sell were very sorry for it after. The effect of all this vigilance upon the comfort and well-being of the town was very marked, and the improvement in the roads outside astonished everybody. The

xvi. The plans which George Beaver prepared for these clearings and widenings can be seen on the walls of the Hitchin Urban District Council's offices.

country squires were amazed to see how comfortably they could get down to Hitchin Bench without holding on for dear life as of old; and long before the seventeen-eighties ended William Windham, the statesman, could record in his diary a noticeable difference in the local roads. In travelling from Ickleford through Hitchin to London he boasts that he was actually able to read a book in his coach, and thought nothing of finishing Terence's *Phormio* before he got to Welwyn.

VII

So long as the trustees kept up their oversight and management of the turnpikes this improvement was maintained. In course of time, however, the Big-Wigs and Notables found the duty of collecting tolls for coaches, gigs, wagons, sheep, swine, etc., a work they could not be bothered with personally, and with regard to which it was practically impossible to find honest collectors. The pikemen, with their black-glazed hats and corduroy breeches, white stockings and white linen aprons, looked sufficiently imposing and impeccable, but beneath their uniform they were known to be a mass of corruption, ready at all times to accept base coin, take bribes, or connive at evasions. In despair the trustees fell back upon a power in the General Turnpike Act, and let out the tolls to some local farmer or to an expert jobber like Levy of London (xvii) or Percy of Lincoln, who took off the trustees' shoulders the whole burden of repair. An auction was held for the purpose at the inn where the trustees were wont to meet, and was conducted in their presence. The Clerk of the Trust was the auctioneer, and, to limit the time for bidding, he was furnished with a minute-glass of sand. The scene has been well described by William Onslow Times, who was clerk to both the Hitchin Trusts: 'The frock coats of the Magistrate-Trustees, the stiff cravats of the parsons, the screen protecting them from the common herd of bidders, the crowd of these, jostling, shouting, and all the louder in their babel by reason of the potations they had indulged in at the

xvii. He has been described as the Napoleon of toll-farmers, and was reported at one time to have contracted for as much as half a million a year, being a third of the aggregate toll revenue of the kingdom, as well as for £300,000 a year post-horse duty (456. 160).

bar (xviii) whilst they waited the Trustees' pleasure—this was an amusing spectacle from the Clerk's point of view, standing midway betwixt aristocracy and pandemonium. The Tolls had to be submitted at the last price they had realised. As the minute glass ran down, the chaff, the oaths, the nudging, the excitement grew until a bid was called out as the last grain dropped, and the glass was turned again for a repetition of the self-same babel' (457). Too often the tolls were knocked down to a jobber, and that meant he would be subletting some of the gates to smaller jobbers, who cared much for their own well-being but precious little for the well-being of the roads. In 1779 the tolls were let to a wine and spirit merchant at Biggleswade, who conceived the clever idea of extending his business by that means in the inns that bordered the Turnpike way.

Now and again the sleeping trustees would awake. In 1820 they had a tremendous altercation with their lessee for letting down the roads, and sent for the Scotland-born genius Macadam to put matters straight. '1820. An account of Mr. McdAam for 6 weeks pay to the labourers, £85. 2. 1.,' followed by a further account of £120 for digging and sifting over a large quantity of small stone, according to Macadam's maxim that 'no stone too big to put in a man's mouth was fit for the repair of the road.' His supervision and that of his son continued from 1820 to 1853, and for a part-time job they received the handsome salary of £340 a year. As soon as Macadam's back was turned, however—and he and his son had similar jobs all over the United Kingdom—the road began to lose its self-respect, and at the first winter's opportunity sank once again into disrepair. The turnpike system was falling on evil days. The Highway Act of 1835, which abolished statute labour and vehicular restrictions and justices' presentments, and which gave to the ratepayers in vestry assembled the power to levy rates for hired labour and salaried officials, did not apply to the turnpikes nor bring them indirectly any sort of relief. By the eighteen-forties the tolls hardly paid the cost of collection, and, what with first and second mortgages, and the habit of suspending payment of interest or converting interest into principal, each year saw the trustees going a little

xviii. Free drinks were sometimes provided by the trustees to encourage a bidding spirit. On one occasion they voted £10 for a dinner to those who attended the auction.

farther downhill along the road to ruin (xix). Then, 1840–50, came the final blow, 'the calamity of railways,' from which hardly a turnpike recovered. Their miserable existence was prolonged by Parliament in the hope that, by doing next to nothing on the road, and by reducing the rate of interest on their loans, they might save enough to pay their creditors in full. By this artful policy they succeeded in getting out of their state of chronic insolvency, and made to all outward appearance a quite respectable end (449). The Hitchin and Bedford Trust was wound up in 1872, and five years later the Hitchin and Welwyn Trust expired (457).

VIII

As the first railway train steamed into Hitchin Station on the 10th of August, 1848, Kershaw's four-in-hand set out on its last journey from the 'Swan' in the Market Place to the Greyhound Inn at Smithfield, and so there came to an end an era that had lasted from the reign of Anne to that of Victoria. No one now will ever compile a history of the coaches and carriers that plied from here to London. They have gone, all of them, the final road of forgetfulness; they have taken their ease in the inn of oblivion, and no writer's whip, not even the crack of doom, will set them upon the roads of memory again. You may still finger the horn and the blunderbuss of Kershaw's coach (xx), and in the cupboards of many a Georgian house in the town you may yet light upon a dusty ticket for the stage, or a bill for the baiting of post-horses or famished passengers. But no straining of the ears along the corridors of time will bring back the merry bustle and lively commotion of that day; the animated scene before the inn as the coach drew up with blaring of horn and clattering of hooves; the awkward descent of stiffened travellers, scuffling along with their bundles and band-boxes to snap up the best places at the parlour fire; the saucy maids at the window, catching many a roving eye and returning many a malapert remark; the quips and curses of the coachy, unbending for the moment to mere hostlers and

xix. The loans of the Hitchin and Welwyn Turnpike Trust amounted in 1838 to as much as £9,000.

xx. By a will of which the author is the executor the horn is to be given to the Hitchin Museum as soon as it is established. The blunderbuss is in Letchworth Museum.

stable-boys; the cheerfully corpulent presence of the host—old Bowcock of the Stevenage 'Swan,' 'the best host I knew almost,' as Pepys declared, or Thomas Cass in later days, quoting his Greek and Latin poets to the amazement of the 'quality' inside —all so dim now, and, but for the picaresque novel, getting altogether muffled in the mists of time (457).

Here and there on the high ground the fog lifts for a moment; but even so the puzzled and short-sighted local historian can see such a little way ahead. William Lucas, for example, in his diary (under the year 1820), quoting from an old book that he neglects to name, says that the first Hitchin coach took the road in or about the year 1706, running three days a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (24). The driver, as we learn from the register of burials in 1707, was John Whittingstall. But who was the proprietor, and what was the high-flying name of the coach itself, and when and why did it cease to run? And was it in that coach, or some gilded affair of his own, there befell the strange adventure of the Duke of Newcastle, who in 1689 had become lord-firmar of Hitchin manor. At any rate, as the Duke was driving through Hitchin on his way to Court in 1708, one Ralph Pearson stopped the coach, opened the door of it, and proclaimed to the startled peer that he, Pearson, was the next heir to the throne, being descended from King David; furthermore, that God would bring to pass his title to be king, and furthermost that he proposed to marry the Duke's daughter, who was sitting by his side. Sound and fury, a magistrate's order, the clanking of a maniac's chains, and so that scene fades out like the episode of a film.

Once again the fog lifts on the slope of Lemsford Hill. It is the first year of Queen Anne, the 4th of September, and seven o'clock at night. Luke Eeles, the famous physician's son, had just met William Brown, the Hitchin carrier, 'and after he had passed he heard Mrs. Anne Phipps cry out, but the way being narrow he could not get to her; however, she was relieved by another. And he heard Mr. Battel (a local clergyman) say: "Sirrah, you had like to have killed a woman in the company and dare you give such language? You ought to have your head broke." Upon which Brown made answer, "What would *you* have, Sirrah," and immediately struck the said Battel thirty or forty blows with a cart-whip and said they (meaning the clergy) were black-coated rascals, and that they would be

damned, and that the Devil would fetch them to Hell by hundreds, with other reviling words.' The rest of the acts of William Brown, and the evil that he did in the sight of the law, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of Quarter Sessions of the County of Hertford? (72. 2. 31).

Occasionally, too, one gets a glimpse of the highwaymen who infested these parts, or, in their own phrase, 'followed their profession' on the Great North Road—a fleeting glimpse only, for it was not their way to show to the world more than a masked face on a murky night, or a pair of heels, or a whirl of dust about their horses' hooves. One little slip, one daylight folly, and these toby-men knew to a certainty they were bound for Newgate, with St. Pulchre's boots [i.e. manacles] to secure them, till the day came to 'ride up Holborn Hill and mount the mare that was foaled of an acorn.' Most of those night-riders, however reckless and violent they might be, loved their skins well enough to mix discretion with their daring, and disguise with an air of gallantry their worst misdeeds. Also, they were sufficiently wise in their generation not to intrude too far in person upon the growing legend of their lives. Their name and fame, strangely mingled of terror and admiration, were upon everybody's lips; their paltriest exploits increasing sometimes twentyfold, sometimes thirtyfold, sometimes a hundredfold, around the punch-bowl at the country inns. Nor did that come to an end with the halter. These gentlemen of the road have done more deeds since their death than ever they dreamed of in their day; and public credulity has multiplied as many relics and prodigies for them as for the medieval saints. Who shall say, for example, what is true and what is false in the tales that have clustered about the memory of John Nevison, 1639–84, 'Nicks,' as he used to be called by his admirers, 'Inspector of the Roads,' as he liked to call himself? His chap-book biography makes him 'exceeding valiant, having also the air and carriage of a gentleman,' and it even bursts out into rhyme-doggerel in his praise:—

> 'He maintained himself like a gentleman;
> Besides, he was good to the poor;
> He rode about like a hero bold
> And gained himself favour therefore.'

But though many good things have been added unto him, the feat he really deserves to be remembered for has been

skilfully appropriated, not to say thieved, by Ainsworth for the glorification of Turpin. The weight of authority, including that of Macaulay, goes to prove that the remarkable non-stop ride was achieved, not by Turpin from London to York, but sixty years before by Nevison from Whetstone to Hitchin.

IX

Of Turpin himself only a few shadowy recollections survive. The landlord of the 'George' at Ickleford will still show you the great chimney-breast where the highwayman on one desperate occasion hid both himself and his plunder. And occasionally you will hear an ancient crony tell how the daughter of a well-known local family was stopped one night by a fine-looking man in a cocked hat, who would have her kiss him, whether she liked it or not, but gave her this consolation, that she would be able to boast all the rest of her life that she had been 'kissed by Dick Turpin.'

Better known than Turpin, however, in these parts was the highwayman John Everitt, who was born and bred of decent family and liberal education at Hitchin (xxi). His father had been churchwarden of St. Mary's and his brother a shop-abiding 'haberdasher of hats'; but John, spoilt perhaps by his training in the arts, would not lower himself by following a trade, and wanted to do something more dashing and romantic than live up to the stuffy family motto: 'Virtue alone is happiness below.' Certainly, if one may trust the lively account of his career which he composed on the eve of his execution in 1730 (432), he experienced quite a lot of happiness outside the bounds of virtue, though in a mock-serious way he affects to have been engaged all the time in a semi-religious profession. It was good for the souls of the rich, so he argued, that he should go on 'rifling them of the mammon of unrighteousness'; it was also advantageous to himself, so he imagined, as it had been aforetime to St. Paul, that 'in journeyings often, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils amongst false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst and cold,' he should so constantly be reminded of his latter end and of the judgment to come.

xxi. A full-length pen-portrait of his life will appear in the companion volume of *Hitchin Worthies*.

He has an Old Testament way, too, of describing his adventures, and a warm admiration of unexpected bravery in 'mere gull citizens,' as may be seen in his narrative of those 'two courageous Quakers who had the assurance to call us sons of violence and jumped out of the coach to give us battle.' In the end the Quakers were discomfited, and one of them was put to shame; for Everitt, in spite of his admiration, was mean enough to deprive him of his wig, giving him in return an old black tie, which he had purchased from a Chelsea pensioner (460). As for false brethren, Everitt had the effrontery to deal with them, not as one highwayman to another, but according to the law. In 1725 he actually filed a bill in equity against Joseph Williams for a partnership account, and so instituted the only highwayman's case known to the English Courts (xxii). The bill recites an oral partnership between the parties, and how they had good success on Hounslow Heath and other places, where they dealt with several gentlemen for divers watches, rings, swords, canes, hats, cloaks, horses, bridles, saddles and other things on very profitable terms. As one might expect, the Court held the bill scandalous and impertinent. Everitt's solicitors had to pay £50 for contempt of court, and his counsel was made responsible for the defendant's costs.

In spite of his religious airs and graces, Everitt came to the inevitable bad end, and so did Williams, and so did most of their successors. Soon or late they were caught up in the hangman's noose. None the less, the profession flourished exceedingly throughout the eighteenth century. In the law-abiding county of Hertford highway robberies were of nightly, almost of daily occurrence; so common, indeed, that travellers learnt to put up with them without undue grumbling or complaint. In 1710 John Cripps was indicted for 'assaulting and offering to shoot Charles Nicholls of Hitchin with a pistoll cocked and charged, and for offering to stabb him with a case-knife or dagger' (402. 29). In 1712 Thomas Field was indicted for assaulting Geo. Lyle of Hitchin by pulling him off his horse (402. 30). In 1755, Mark Hildesley, vicar of Hitchin, was robbed, or, as he terms it, 'saluted by the way,' as he went to London to

xxii. Mr. Justice Darling has expressed a doubt whether the 'Highwayman's Case' ever existed, except as a joke. But the particulars have been verified from the original papers in the Record Office. See the *Law Quarterly Review*, July 1893, ix, 197.

obtain particulars of the diocese of Sodor and Man which had been offered to him; but except in a good-humoured reference to the 'road-collector,' he hardly stops to mention the occurrence in his diary (201. 92):—

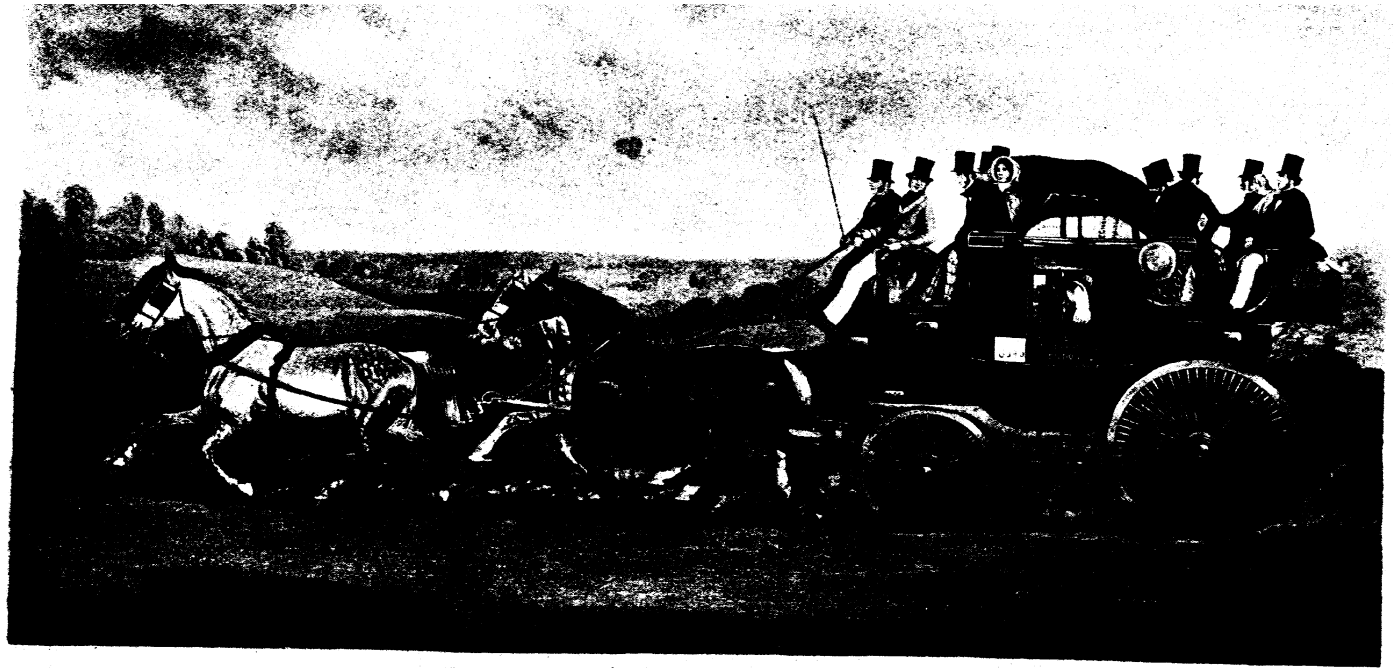
	£	s.	d.
Post chaise, Hitchin to Welwyn	0	8	9
Post chaise, Welwyn to Barnet	0	11	6
Paid Road Collector in money	4	14	6
Ditto watch which cost me	9	9	0
Post chaise to Hanover Square	0	10	7½
Turnpikes	0	0	10
	£15	15	2½

In 1787 Kenned Thomas Smith was charged with stopping John Matthews on the highway near Hitchin, with 'putting him in fear and taking 14s. from him, and stripping him, and taking away his wearing apparel, and dragging him into a wood, and tying his hands and feet together, and forcing a flint stone into his mouth' (402. 32). In 1798 Alexander Hobbs, alias Joe the Hatter, was indicted for robbing Ann Conner on the highway. It was the last and perhaps the least glorious of his exploits. '1799. Paid Cart and Horses to attend the execution of Joe the Hatter, 10s.; ditto for rope and executioner, 11s. 6d.; Wine for sacrament, 1s. 6d.' (402. 33–4).

Among the papers of the late William Beck there was a manuscript of the eighteenth century giving a delightful account of a robbery upon two Quakers who were precisians indeed: 'Elizabeth Beck of Hitchin,' so it runs, 'was once accompanying her friend, Dr. Pope, a fellow Quaker, on his round, when they were stopped by a highwayman in a mask, who made the demand for money in the usual way. Elizabeth Beck said she had left her purse at home. "I believe you, Madam," said the highwayman, whose pistol she observed pointed at them. The doctor handed over what loose cash he had in his pocket, and Elizabeth Beck observed how white was the hand put out to take it, showing it was a gentleman who had taken to the road. "And now," said he to the doctor, "your watch, Sir." The doctor felt for it and was surprised not to find it in his fob as usual, and told him so, at which the highwayman turned his horse's head and rode away. Scarce was he out of sight when the doctor, feeling again, found his watch *was* in the fob; but the chain, usually outside, had fallen and so deceived him into

thinking it was lost. "I must drive back and tell him," said he, and would hardly be persuaded by Elizabeth Beck to desist from such a purpose through her assurances that he had told what at the time he believed was the truth, and had become entitled to profit by what was so unexpected a result. The watch as the gift of Princess Amelia to her medical attendant was of great value, but the doctor's conscientiousness would have made it as nothing to ensure a maintenance of truth in all his acts and words.'

These highway depredations continued far into the nineteenth century. As late as 1826 the Hitchin stage-coach was robbed of six hundred sovereigns belonging to the Bank; and right up to 1840 Foote's wagon was escorted by three men, all of whom were armed (447). At no time, however, does the coaching traffic appear to have been intimidated by these terrors. Such incidents were all part of the day's work—bad weather, bad roads, bad men. In spite of them all, one observes a large increase in coaching facilities by the close of the eighteenth century (23 & 446). To begin with, there was the Hitchin stage-coach (proprietors, Jonas and Richard Kershaw), which set out from the 'Red Lion' every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8 a.m. and arrived in Smithfield about two. Inside fare, eight shillings for the thirty-five miles (447). The Bedford stage-coach called at the 'Sun' for passengers on the same days at 10 a.m., the Leeds mail-coach on alternate days at twelve, and the Kettering coach at one. The Hitchin stage-wagon (proprietor, Thomas Watson, formerly Thomas Paternoster) set out every Monday and Thursday at noon, arriving at the 'White Hart,' St. John Street, at seven the next morning. Bailey, of Bedford, also had three wagons that passed through the town; and, for the villages around, there was Richardson's wagon from Brook End, Hipgrave's from Pirton, Wand's from Henlow, and Piddle's from Stevenage. Great lumbering, springless things these wagons were, that creaked and jolted painfully their slow length along, with canopies lurching heavily to and fro, like the shells of primitive stupendous snails. In the dark, cavernous inside, a few passengers—too poor to take the coach—crouching in straw for warmth's sake, or stowed away amongst the goods. In front, a string of horses, sometimes as many as sixteen, straining to move this timbered monstrosity out of the yawning ruts; the laggards amongst them lashed to a foaming



KERSHAW'S HITCHIN COACH.

From the painting by W. Shayer, 1850

The two Quaker ladies inside the coach are Margaret and Mary Ann Exton, afterwards Mrs Gurney Barclay and Mrs. Frederic Seebohm. On the box seat beside John Kershaw is Lord Dacre. Amongst the other 'outsides' are known to be Lord Ducie, the Hon. Robert Grimston, and Mr. and Mrs. Dudley Ryder. It is believed that Lord Lytton and John Hawkins are also represented

frenzy by the long whip and scorpion tongue of the wagoner, himself almost as monstrous as his wagon; 'his old rheumatic limbs,' as Leigh Hunt describes, 'shaking under a weight of rags, and the snow and sleet beating into his puckered face through lanes that the wind scours like a channel.' Paternoster, Watson, Kemp, Cain, Foote—one after another they have gone the old and common road, whence there is no returning; most of them by rough usage worn right through like the tyres of their wagon-wheels; and a few like Kemp himself, plucked off the driving-seat by Highwayman Death, the whip still warm in his hands. On the night of March 11, 1818, Kemp's wagon appeared at Hitchin in a ghostly fashion, with no driver on the box at all. Poor Kemp, who had been carrier for sixteen years, was found lying in the road outside the town, with his body mercilessly mauled and his head crushed to atoms (444).

X

The members of the Kershaw family, who for a hundred years ran the Hitchin coach, were more fortunate, for they were patronized by the peerage and died comfortably well off in their beds. Their coach-line goes back to John Shrimpton, a servant of the Sixth Lord Salisbury, who was set up with one of his Lordship's own coaches, and horses enough to run from Hatfield to London. After a short trial this was found not to pay, whereupon Lord Salisbury, not liking the continual draft upon his purse, signified his intention of taking away what he had so liberally given, and would have done so had not honest John exclaimed, 'Well, the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' This Scripture worked powerfully upon the pity of his patron, with the result that Shrimpton was set up in business once again, this time on a more extended scale (447). Thenceforth the coach was made to run from Hitchin, and once a week from Bedford—all the scheduled times of leaving and arriving, as the quaint handbill announces, 'to be performed if God permits' (433).

That was in 1741, and for well over a hundred years the journey to London and back was faithfully performed—first by Shrimpton, and then in turn by three generations of his kinsmen, the Kershaws, until what the Lord had given the railway took

away. The last of the Kershaws (xxiii) was a perfect master of the long whip, and used to boast that he could take a fly off his leader's ear. On one occasion, when the coach was running at full speed, an adder was seen gliding across the road just in front of the horses. With a sudden dexterous movement, Kershaw wound his whip-lash round the body of the reptile, and brought it on to the coach-top, to the horror of the passengers. Now and again he would indulge the horse-play of his wit as well at the expense of the passers-by and for the gratuitous entertainment of the passengers on top. Those who were penned inside missed many a quip and quirk, and on the last journeys many a gibe at the coming rival on the rail. As Kershaw coached past the long line of arches which were being erected for the Welwyn viaduct, he used to point with his whip and say, 'There rises my *arch* enemy.' For the slow-coach 'Perseverance' to compete with 'Puffing Billy' was impossible; to be passed and cut out by it after a century's good fame would be a disgrace not to be endured. Kershaw's companion, Joe Walter, the Royston coachy, braved it out for a season. 'Here comes old Hell in harness,' he used to roar as the steam-engine spluttered and clattered by, leaving him helplessly behind (xxiv). 'Here's to Mac Adam,' he would sing out in his lusty voice when safely back at the 'Bull':—

'Here's to Mac Adam, the Mac of all Macs,
Here's to the road we ne'er tire on;
Let we but roll o'er the granite he cracks,
Ride ye who like it on iron.
Let the steam pot
Hiss till it's hot,
Give me the speed of the Tantivy Trot.'

With more foresight and a better grace John Kershaw accepted the inevitable. When the first train arrived like a portent at Hitchin he knew that his hour had struck. The social amenities, the easygoing republic of the road had fallen, perhaps for ever, before the iron despotism of the rail. For him there was nothing to be done but swallow his pride, sell his horses, and sink into private, pedestrian life.

xxiii. My account of him is based on information contained in a series of letters written to me by his granddaughter in 1918–19. See No. 459.

xxiv. I was told by Alfred Kingston, the Royston historian, that Joey Walter fired off his blunderbuss at the first train he saw—and at close range, too.

XI

This long digression upon coaches and carriers has taken us some distance out of our way, if not off the road altogether. But there was not much farther to go. With the passing of the Highway Act, 1835, we come treading upon the heels of the modern world, whilst the discontinuance of the turnpikes is a matter of living memory. It is sufficient here to remind the intelligent reader of the immemorial autonomy of each parish over its own roads, which the Highway Act left untouched; of the long waste of time and money before this passionate attachment to parochial management gave way to wider views of administration; of the rooted distrust and jealousy of neighbouring parishes, breaking down of necessity at last in the formation of Highway Districts and Highway Boards, able to pay a suitable salary to a competent District Surveyor; of the superseding of the vestry as the Highway Authority by the new Local Boards of Health under the Public Health Act of 1848, the voluntary provisions of which statute Hitchin was the second town in England to adopt; of the highway jurisdiction given to the county by the Local Government Act of 1894; and, finally, of the setting up of the Road Board as an expert central department in 1909. It used to be alleged of the Hitchin Local Board in its early days, as of many similar Boards, that it 'sprinkled a few pebbles on the highway and then declared it to be well and truly mended.' All that is changed long since. The solid amalgam of crushed granite or basalt now employed, the making of it smooth, watertight and dustless by steam-rolling and the application of tar, produces a road that can stand anything—even the criticism of petty parish detractors. The problem indeed has shifted. We are more put to it nowadays to regulate the traffic than to repair the roads. At a rush and unprepared we have arrived at an era when the world is to be made safe for democracy and motor-buses. The motor-cycles that screech their way along the streets, the endless stream of cars, the monster motor-lorries, shake the very foundations of our homes and kill off an alarming number of our citizens. Perhaps we should have foreseen these things. As Wickham Inskip, who used to attend Hitchin market said to the author far back in 1901: 'If people only read the Bible they would know what was coming to pass. All

this was clearly foretold in Nahum ii. 4: "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways, they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings." ' Not long after that—1904—the Hitchin Bench was convulsed by an application for a summons against a townsman for '*distracting* the highway.' It was difficult not to smile at the mistake (*obstructing* was the offence), but before very long '*distracting*' will have to be made a punishable offence. However, with cotton-wool in our ears and a life insurance in our pocket, we may leave these problems and the story of their solution to the historians of to-morrow.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GENERAL

N.B.—*Where sufficient particulars of any authority are set out in the text, that authority is not repeated in this Bibliography.*

(1) 1275–1907. A collection of papers made by Frederic Seebohm, of the Hermitage, Hitchin. These have been placed at the disposal of the author by Miss Esther Seebohm and will remain in his custody. They comprise, *inter alia* :—

(*a*) Notes for the collection of materials for a history of Hitchin, made by Alexander Pulling, of The Croft, Hitchin, 1895–1904.

(*b*) Scheme for a new topographical survey of the parish, 1907.

(*c*) Extracts relating to Hitchin from the *De Banco* Rolls in the reigns of Edward I, II and III.

(*d*) Extracts relating to Hitchin from the Assize Rolls, Nos. 324–328, i.e. from 1278–1287.

(*e*) Extracts relating to Hitchin from the Patent Rolls of Richard II, Henry IV, and Edward VI, and the Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.

(*f*) Lists of lay subsidies levied on Hitchin townsmen in the years 1294, 1295, 1440, 1549, 1570, 1596.

(*g*) Extracts relating to Hitchin from the Feet of Fines from 1540–1624.

(*h*) Extracts relating to Hitchin from Fines and Recoveries from 1550–1670.

(*i*) Extracts relating to Hitchin from the Calendars of State Papers (Domestic), 1547–1673 and 1689–1692.

(*j*) Extracts relating to Hitchin from the records of the Common Pleas in the reign of Elizabeth.

(*k*) Extracts relating to Hitchin from Chancery Proceedings, Exchequer Accounts, and Petitions to the Court of Requests in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I.

(*l*) Memoranda on The Croft, Hitchin, by Alexander Pulling.

(*m*) Memoranda on the Brotherhood House by Frederic Seebohm, Wentworth Huyshe and others, together with notes on the family of Docwra who once lived there.

(*n*) Notes upon Hitchin nomenclature.

(*o*) Notes on the plaster decorations in the old post office in the Market Square.

(2) 1475–1880. Deeds and documents in the muniment room at Hitchin Priory. These have not been calendared, but the author

has perused every document and has classified and numbered whatever concerns parish affairs and has any historical value. The collection consists of (1) the few records of the Carmelite foundation that survive. These are noted below in the bibliography of the Priory. (2) Title-deeds of the Radcliffe estates. An index of these was prepared by William Wilshere and is in the keeping of the agent of the Priory estate. (3) Family letters, building and estate accounts, and ledgers, invoices and trade returns of the Radcliffe factories in the Levant, 1715–1760. The papers last named are of considerable importance and number over 20,000. The author has sifted and set apart those of outstanding interest. See also No. 252, a separate collection made by Reginald L. Hine. (4) Papers relating to parish affairs and loose accounts of Hitchin churchwardens, overseers, surveyors and constables. These need to be read in conjunction with the more formal accounts of the town officers now stored in St. Mary's Church.

(3) 1560–1920. Extracts relating to Hitchin found amongst the 305 volumes of MSS. in the Archidiaconal Library at Huntingdon (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(4) 1562–1927. Registers of baptism, marriage and burial (St. Mary's Church records). N.B. These are kept in a safe in the tower of the church.

(5) 1585–1890. A miscellaneous collection of deeds, wills, settlements, rolls, and other legal and family papers relating to Hitchin, together with the original day-books and cost-books of John Skinner (founder of the firm), and of Messrs. Tristram, Draper, Wilshere and Hawkins, his successors in practice. Contained in two large rooms in the attics of Messrs. Hawkins & Co., of Portmill Lane. There is an index of names running to 220 pages.

(6) 1598. *Speculi Britanniæ Pars:* A description of Hartfordshire. John Norden. Hitchin, pp. 3, 4, 6, 18. The B.M. copy has a marginal note in the hand of John Stow referring to the derivation of the place-name 'Hitchin.'

(7) 1610–1820. Transcripts of Registers, records of the archdeacon's court, terriers of Church lands, clergy-discipline papers, faculty books, probates, licences, and miscellaneous documents relating to the archdeaconry of Huntingdon, in which Hitchin formerly lay. A large and almost unknown collection of papers housed in the cellars of Messrs. Hawkins & Co., whose predecessors acted as registrars for the Archdeacon. It is proposed to transfer

this collection before long to the muniment room of the diocese of St. Albans. Meantime copies of the hitherto unpublished registers are being taken by the College of Arms. Copies of whatever relates to Hitchin have been taken by and remain filed and numbered in the custody of Reginald L. Hine. There is no index. The papers are, however, grouped in parishes. Mr. H. M. Penn, of the College of Arms, has given months of his own time to the repair and deciphering of these records. For a volume formerly belonging to this collection see No. 182.

(8) 1700. The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire. Sir Henry Chauncy. Hitchin, 388–398; and see his index under Baliol, Bardolfe, Blomville, Bragge, Chapman, Chester, Cobham, Cock, Coffyn, Docwra, Draper, Ealdred, Fanshaw, Hale, Hitch, Langford, Lee, Lucas, Mattock, Mountjoy, Pulter, Ratcliff, Sadler, Say, Seagrave, Skinner, Snagge, Sturgeon, Tristram, Wilshere, Wisebeard. There was a useful reprint of this history in two volumes in 1826. For the account of Hitchin see Vol. ii, pp. 161–180. Unfortunately, the index does not give Christian names. For the purpose of this work the reprint has been used.

(9) 1720. Magna Brittania Antiqua et Nova, or a New Survey of Great Britain. Collected and composed by an impartial hand. Hertfordshire, Hitchin Hundred, Vol. ii, p. 980.

(10) 1728. The History of Hertfordshire. Nathaniel Salmon. Hitchin, pp. 160–166. N.B. To be used with discrimination. There is no great merit in this work, and 'very much felony,' as Bacon used to say, seeing what pages of it are copied direct from Sir Henry Chauncy. Many of Salmon's original observations have been challenged. An index of the references to Hitchin scattered through the book is in the possession of Reginald L. Hine and can be seen by students. Two copies of Salmon in the Bodleian (Gough's Hertfordshire, 16 and 18) contain some valuable MS. notes written by Richard Gough, *circa* 1795.

(11) 1735–1928. Register Books of the Conveyancing done by the firm of Messrs. Hawkins & Co., 12 volumes, indexed. Since 1907 the drafts of all conveyances, leases, wills, etc., have been filed. The earlier drafts are pigeonholed in the attics. See separate reference under 1585, No. 5 above.

(12) 1741. A survey of the parish made by John Davis (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(13) 1756. The Modern Universal British Traveller, p. 253.

(14) 1766–1767 Enclosure award of the common fields of Walsworth (Dep. Keeper's Rep. XXVII, App. 2. Official copy in the possession of Reginald L. Hine)

(15) 1767–1806. Diary of an inhabitant of Hitchin. (MS. in the Topographical Library, Herts County Museum.)

(16) 1772–1927. References to Hitchin in the Hertfordshire Mercury. Copious extracts have been taken from the earlier files by C. Loftus Barham.

(17) 1776–1848. Diary of Daniel Times. (MS. in the possession of his grandson, William Onslow Times.)

(18) 1778. Daniel Defoe's Tour on foot through Hertfordshire, 1723, with additions by Dr. Richardson, p. 157.

(19) 1779. Law and History relating unto Hitchin Portman and Forreigne in the County of Hertford. Being Historical Memoirs and Extracts from Records, Surveys, Terrars, Rentals, Court Rolls and other legal and approved Evidences and Authorities therein duly cited and referred unto concerning the antient Royal Seigniory and Mannor and Town of Hitchin aforesaid, for the Service of and humbly inscribed to The Right Worshipfull William Bogdani Esquire, Fellow of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies in London, and a member of the Spalding Gentlemans Society in Lincolnshire, Clerk in the office of Ordnance at the Tower of London, and Lord Firmar of His Majesty of the said Mannor. . . . By Maurice Johnson of the Inner Temple Esquire, Steward of the said Mannor. (MS. in the possession of William Onslow Times.) There is an index on page 1.

(20) 1783. A Hundred and Twenty Years Ago. Hitchin in 1783. (Herts Express, November 28, 1903.)

(21) 1785–1826. The History and Antiquities of the Town and Parish of Hitchin in Hertfordshire: containing an account of the Manors of Hitchin, Moremead, Minsden and Temple Dinsley from the earliest historical evidence to the time present: their name, situation, rivers, soil, produce, fossils, mineral waters, and ancient remains, viz. Wilbury Hill, Roman Roads, Barrows, coins, etc.: the Rectory, Vicarage, Church, meeting-houses, monumental inscriptions, the Priory, Biggin, Brotherhood House, Free Schools, Almshouses, and other charitable foundations: Biographical anecdotes of eminent natives and residents, Lords of Manors, Lords-Firmars, Vicars, Dissenting Ministers, Eminent Quakers, etc. Remarkable occurrences, storms, high winds, fires, accidents, plagues and other epidemic diseases: Domesday and other surveys, grants, rentals, laws, customs, tenures, markets, fairs, trade, etc. The whole collected from authentic historians, manuscripts and various other sources of information, particularly the printed accounts of Norden, Chauncy, Salmon and Young. By Isaac James. Begun July 23rd, 1785, at Hitchin. Begun again in this present manuscript, October 25th, 1817, at

Bristol, the former collections being transcribed into it and numerous articles added.

N.B. This manuscript history is not quite as long as its title might lead one to expect, though it took forty-one years to complete and runs to 250 closely written pages in folio. Isaac James was the son of Samuel James, pastor of Tilehouse Street Baptist Chapel. His work, though more of a compilation than a history, is of considerable value, being made at a time when few, if any, interested themselves in the historical evidences of the town and when its records were being wantonly destroyed. James was by profession a poet, a chemist, and an undertaker, but his historical work is free from poetical conceits, or quack remedies for ancient evils, or the necrology of local families. He makes it plain that the Baptists will inherit the earth as well as the Kingdom of Heaven, and he swells out the story of their worthies. But that may be excused, seeing whose son he was. The MS. has been acquired by and remains in the possession of Reginald L. Hine. There is an index on page 236, and there are numerous illustrations.

(22) 1786. The Antiquities of England and Wales. Henry Boswell. No pagination. Hitchin, Co. Herts, comes between Cumberland and Northumberland, near the end of the volume.

(23) 1793. Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufacture, comprising lists of inhabitants. Peter Barfoot and John Wilkes. Hitchin, Vol. iii, pp. 375–380.

(24) 1803–1845. The diaries of William Lucas of Hitchin, Brewer, in twelve small books (MSS. in the possession of Stephen Lucas).

(25) 1808. The Beauties of England and Wales, or Original Delineations, Topographical, Historical and Descriptive, of each County. Edward Wedlake Brayley. Hitchin, Vol. viii, p. 166.

(26) 1809–1895. The diary of George Beaver, Land Surveyor, and for many years surveyor and general adviser to the Hitchin Local Board (MS. in the possession of Miss Vera Parker. Copy in that of C. Loftus Barham).

(27) 1811. The History of the Worthies of England, endeavoured by Thomas Fuller. Edited by John Nichols. Hitchin references: Vol. i, p. 190, Ralph Radcliffe; p. 353, Thomas Walden; p. 440, Richard Hale; p. 441, Ralph Ostrich; p. 443, Henry Cocke; Vol. ii, p. 41, Sir Ralph Sadler.

(28) 1815 History of Hitchin: containing an Historical Account thereof, from the earliest period to the present time; the Antiquities of the Church, Priory and other buildings in its vicinity, by William Dunnage. In his preface he

says: 'How far the testimony of the earlier part of this History is to be doubted I am not able to judge, but in support of its authenticity I have to assert that it is handed down to me from the testimony of John Blomville, one of the founders of the Priory of the White Carmelites in Hitchin, and Thomas Cobham, a descendant of John Cobham, another of the founders of the same. Unfortunately for posterity, the books from which I copied the following pages were through negligence allowed to become so damp that, upon turning over the leaves in translating, they completely dropped from the fingers on the slightest touch, and probably the most essential part of the history of this town is for ever lost.' (This MS., now in the possession of Reginald L. Hine, contains 370 pages, a portrait of the author, and many illustrations in Dunnage's own hand. There is a chronological table of 'remarkable occurrences,' but no index except the makeshift compiled by R. L. H. for his own use.)

(29) 1815. A book of plans of the Town and Parish of Hitchin, with a Schedule giving names of the occupiers and owners of the properties delineated, by H. S. Merrett.

(30) 1815–1867. Diary of Joseph Sharples. (MS. in the possession of Francis Ransom.)

(31) 1817. The History and Antiquities of the County of Hertford, compiled from the best printed authorities and original records, preserved in public repositories and private collections, embellished with views of the most curious monuments of Antiquity. Robert Clutterbuck of Watford, Esquire, F.S.A. Hitchin, Vol. iii, pp. 12–55. See the index also for the families named in the reference to Chauncy's History, No. 8 above.

(32) 1819. The New British Traveller or Modern Panorama, Vol. iii, pp. 41–2.

(33) 1833. A Topographical Dictionary of Great Britain and Ireland. John Gorton. Hitchin, Vol. ii, p. 231.

(34) 1834. The Town of Hitchin. By S. B. E[dwards]. An article printed in The Christian's Penny Magazine for August 9th. Contains also a drawing by Isaac James.

(35) 1830–1890. An album of paper cuttings, prints and drawings compiled by William Lucas and continued by William and Theodore Lucas, his sons. (MS. in the possession of Theodore Lucas.)

(36) 1836. Lecture on 'The Progress of Civilisation in England with especial reference to Hitchin,' delivered by Whiston Bristow to the members of the Hitchin Mechanics' Institution.

(37) 1837. The English Counties Delineated. Thomas Moule Account of Hitchin, Vol. i, p. 30.

(38) 1838. A copy made by William Lucas of the chief matters of interest in the manuscript memoirs of John Geard, sometime pastor at Tilehouse Street Chapel. (MS. in the possession of the Lucas family.) These memoirs have since disappeared.

(39) 1838. Hitchin. A poem. By a resident of Hitchin. N.B. Painful doggerel by one whose name it would be cruel to make known; but there are some useful topographical touches.

(40) 1844. Corrected Survey of the parish of Hitchin with the hamlets of Preston, Langley and Walsworth. Anthony Jackson, apportioner of Barkway, and J. Bailey Denton, Surveyor, Gray's Inn, London.

(41) 1848–1927. Minute Books of the Hitchin Local Board, 1848–1894, and of the Hitchin Urban District Council, 1894–1927, account-books, rate-books, plans of road-widenings, improvement-schemes, housing and town-planning schemes. (MSS. in the possession of the H.U.D.C.)

(42) 1849. Report of the General Board of Health on a Preliminaty Inquiry into the sewerage, drainage and supply of water and the sanitary condition of the Inhabitants of the town of Hitchin. William Ranger, C.E., Superintending Inspector. Two Plans.

(43) 1849. A Topographical Dictionary of England, with Historical and Statistical Descriptions. Samuel Lewis. Hitchin, Vol. ii, p. 521.

(44) 1850–1927. One album of original documents, transcripts, photographs and paper cuttings compiled by John Thompson and now in the possession of his family. Two albums of similar contents compiled by Lawson and Mary Thompson. There is an index to each volume.

(45) 1850–1880. Memoranda and paper cuttings relating to Hitchin collected by Dr. Oswald Foster.

(46) 1853–1908. Paternoster's Monthly Advertiser, established by Charles and Jonathan Paternoster, of Sun Street. Considerable attention was paid in this paper to matters of history and antiquity. C. Loftus Barham possesses a run from 1854–1890.

(47) 1855–1927. The Herts Express. N.B. The files can be consulted by arrangement with the editor. In progress.

(48) 1855. Byelaws made by the Local Board of Health for the Township of Hitchin under the powers of the Public Health Act, 1848, signed by Joseph Sharples, Edward Burton, William Lucas, William Hill, and James Ellard, and allowed by Lord Palmerston.

(49) 1865–1928. Photographs of Hitchin. T. B. Latchmore and T. W Latchmore. Four volumes in the possession of T. W. Latchmore. Notes and paper-cuttings accompany many of the views. Many of the negatives are preserved.

(50) 1870–1873. History of Hertfordshire, containing an account of the descents of the various manors, pedigrees of families connected with the County, antiquities, local customs, etc. John Edwin Cussans. Hitchin, Vol. ii, pp. 33–88. The index to the Hitchin half-hundred, Vol. ii, pp. 163–174, should be consulted for the families named above in the reference to Chauncy's History, No. 8 above.

(51) 1870–1890. An album of paper-cuttings, prints, maps and drawings of Hitchin compiled by W. J. Fitch. Now in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.

(52) 1871. Handbook to Hitchin and the neighbourhood, containing an historical sketch of the town, and a description of its places of public worship, public buildings, charitable and literary institutions, etc., compiled by C. Bishop. Later editions in 1875 and 1899.

(53) 1875–1890. Original documents, transcripts of records and notes relating to Hitchin. Collected and made by Francis Lucas. These include some 20 pages in his own handwriting, beginning an account of the town which was not concluded. This collection was presented by William Tindall Lucas to Reginald L. Hine, and remains in his possession.

(54) 1877. Enclosure award of Bury Mead and in 1886 of Cock Mead (Blue Book, Incl. Awards, 64).

(54*a*) 1880. A Guide to Hertfordshire. By an old inhabitant. Hitchin, pp. 201–208.

(55) 1883. The English Village Community. Frederic Seebohm. By the gift of Miss Seebohm, the author possesses many of the original notes and plans made by F. S. for the writing and illustration of this work.

(56) 1883. Grant of the market tolls by the Crown to the Hitchin Local Board for £4,000 (Rep. of Roy. Com. on Markets and Fairs, xii (1), 124).

(57) 1885–1927. Original documents, paper-cuttings and memoranda relating to the county of Hertford and more particularly to the town of Hitchin. Compiled by C. Loftus Barham. Four volumes in his possession.

(58) 1886. An account of British and Roman remains found in the neighbourhood of Hitchin. William Ransom, F.L.S., F.S.A. (Trans. of the Herts Nat. Hist. Soc., Vol. iv, Part 2, July, pp. 39–48.) N.B. The MS. notes and drawings for the preparation of this paper are in the possession of Francis Ransom, Newlands, Hitchin. A review, signed by C. R. S., appeared in the Journal of the British Arch. Assoc., xlii, p. 42.

(59) 1891–1927. Four volumes of newspaper cuttings relating to Hitchin compiled by and in the possession of Herbert H. Minnis.

(60) 1892. An Archæological Survey of Hertfordshire, communicated to the Society of Antiquarians by John Evans. Hitchin, pp. 12–13 (Proc. Soc. of Antiquaries, 2nd Series, XIV, 8).

(61) 1894. Some points of interest in and around Hitchin. Ellen Pollard. (The Hertfordshire Illustrated Review, p. 286.) See also 'The Learned Shepherd of Faire Hitching Hill' (George Chapman). Frank Rinder, p. 105.

(62) 1894. Twenty-one years of local government at Hitchin. William Onslow Times. (MS. in the possession of the Hitchin Urban District Council.)

(63) 1895–1910. Five portfolios of memoranda collected by W. B. Gerish, secretary of the East Herts Archæological Society, and forming the Hitchin section of his materials for a History of the county of Hertford. These are deposited at the Public Library at St. Albans for the use of students; but by the courtesy of the librarian I have had the continuous use of them at Hitchin for ten years.

(64) 1895–1899. Extracts relating to Hitchin and Hitchin families taken by Reginald L. Hine from 'The Herts Genealogist and Antiquary,' edited by William Brigg. 3 volumes. (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(65) 1895–1898. Middlesex and Hertfordshire Notes and Queries. See Index under Hitchin.

(65*a*) 1898. Bygone Hertfordshire. William Andrews. See Index under Hitchin.

(66) 1900. Poems by W. J. Carter of Hitchin (descriptive of the Hitchin of 1850–1860).

(67) 1902. Highways and Byways in Hertfordshire. Herbert W. Tompkins, with illustrations by Frederick L. Griggs. Hitchin, pp. 215–231.

(68) 1903. Hitchin and neighbourhood, a study of local geology. William Hill.

(69) 1904. Picturesque Hertfordshire. F. A. Kitton. See Index under Hitchin.

(70) 1904. Hitchin in Olden Times. W. E. Pitt. (Herts Express, December 17th.)

(71) 1905. Memorials of Old Hertfordshire. Percy Cross Standing. See pp. 152, 153, 158, 161.

(72) 1905–1910. Notes and Extracts from Session Rolls, 1581–1894. Ed. by W. J. Hardy. 3 vols. See Index under Hitchin.

(73) 1906. References to the commercial and religious life of Hitchin in the eighteenth century (Report on the MSS. of the Earl of Verulam at Gorhambury, pp. 139, 140, 143, 218).

(73*a*) 1907. Hertfordshire Families. Ed. by Duncan Warrand. See Index under (1) Cock, (2) Dashwood, (3) Delmé, (4) Dockwra, (5) Hale, (6) Ithell, (7) Lucas, (8) Papworth, (9) Radcliffe, (10) Read, (11) Sadleir, (12) Skinner, (13) Snagge, (14) Tristram, (15) Wilshere.

(74) 1909. Record of Inscriptions in the Cemetery, Hitchin, up to 31st August, 1909. H. F. Hatch. (MS. in St. Albans Public Library.)

(75) 1910. A Hand List of Books relating to Hitchin Topography. Wentworth Huyshe. (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(76) 1910. An inventory of the Historical Monuments in Hertfordshire: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. Hitchin, pp. 117–125; and see the Historical Introduction, pp. 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22.

(77) 1910. The Teaching of History and the Use of Local Illustrations: a paper read at the Girls' Grammar School, Hitchin, to the Herts Branch of the Historical Association in October. Frederic Seebohm. (Historical Association Publications, Leaflet No. 45.)

(78) 1910–1912. Transcripts from records and State Papers relating to Hitchin made for the purposes of the Victoria County History of Hertfordshire. A part only of these was incorporated in the V.C.H. account of Hitchin, but by the courtesy of William Page, the editor, I have been allowed to use the whole. (MSS. in the possession of the publishers of the V.C.H.)

(79) 1912. A History of the County of Hertford (Victoria History of the Counties of England). Edited by William Page. Hitchin, Vol. iii, pp. 1–21. The Index to the Bedfordshire volumes in the same series has fifteen references to Hitchin.

(80) 1914–1927. Copies made by Reginald L. Hine of all references to Hitchin in the 758 volumes on the shelves 2073–2080 in the British Museum, comprising (1) Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain; (2) Close Rolls; (3) Charter Rolls; (4) Patent Rolls; (5) Calendar of State Papers (Domestic); (6) Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII; (7) Feudal Aids; (8) Inquisitions Post-mortem; (9) Pipe Roll Society's Publications; (10) Acts of the Privy Council; (11) Treasury Books and Papers. (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(81) 1915. Hertfordshire: a collection of topographical views, portraits, genealogies, and printed matter relating to the county of Hertford. Hitchin, pp. 180–184. (MS. at Kensington Public Library.)

(82) 1919. Report upon the Queen Street Area and its relation to the Town Planning of Hitchin. Ewart G. Culpin.

(83) 1919. Preliminary Report upon a scheme for the Town Planning of Hitchin. Ewart G. Culpin.

(84) 1920. A collection of deeds relating to Hitchin of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries purchased by Walter Odell from F. A. Wright, and now in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.

(85) 1924. A collection of papers relating to the Hale family acquired from E. Williams of Hove. Those relating to Hitchin have been numbered and filed. (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(86) 1927. Public Enquiry into the Town Planning Scheme of the Hitchin Urban District Council (see Herts Express of March 12th and 19th); and see also the memorandum of the Ministry of Health, published in the Herts Express, October 21st.

(87) 1927. A collection of deeds, documents, Acts of Parliament, plans and papers chiefly relating to the Sadleir, Ithell, and Darton families of Temple Dinsley, Hitchin, presented to the author by Douglas Vickers of Temple Dinsley. (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(88) No date. Deeds and documents relating to Hitchin in the possession of the Wilshere family at The Frythe, Welwyn, Herts. Up to the present, permission to examine these has not been vouchsafed. The author hopes, however, to report upon them in the Bibliography to Vol. 2.

THE MANOR

(89) 1062. The Great Charter of Waltham (Cotton MSS., Tiberius, C. IX); and see Kemble Cod. Dipl. dcccxiii.

(90) 1086. Survey in Domesday Book of the manor of Hiz and the sub-manors of Cerletone (Charlton), Deneslai (Dinsley), Menlesdene (Minsden), Welei (Preston), Welle (Welbury), Flesmere (Felxmere ?), Leglega (Ley Green ?), Hegestanestone (Hexton), Wilei (Willian), Offelei (Offley), Wavedene (Wandon [End] in King's Walden), Wimundeslai (Wymondley), Waldenei (King's Walden). The significance of certain entries discussed: (*a*) V.C.H. Herts, Vol. i, pp. 265–300; and (*b*) by Wentworth Huyshe in his 'The Royal Manor of Hitchin,' 1906, pp. 26–37.

(91) 1110 (*circa*). Grant by Guy de Baliol to St. Albans Abbey of a virgate of land at Hexton in the Manor of Hitchin (B.M., Cotton MSS., Nero, D. VII, f. 94*b*).

(92) 1185 (*circa*). *De Inventione Sanctæ Crucis Nostræ*, etc. Copy of a contemporary tract recording *inter alia* the gift of Hicce to Waltham Abbey (Cotton MSS., Julius, D. VI, 3, pp. 73–123). Edited by William Stubbs, 1861.

(93) 1205. Demise of Hitchin Manor by Hugh de Baliol to Benedict the Jew to secure the loan of 120 marks (Pipe Rolls, 6 John, m. 3*d*).

(94) 1215 (*circa*). Grant by Hugh de Baliol of land 'under Langley Wood Hicche' to the Abbot of St. Albans (Cotton MSS., Julius, D. III).

(95) 1216. Grant of 'the land of Hitchen' by Henry III to Archbishop Stephen Langton until Hugh de Baliol shall render Whorlton Castle and other lands of Robert de Mesnil wrongfully detained by him (Close Rolls, 1 Hen. III, 339, 346, 361).

(96) 1221. Grant to Hugh de Baliol of the right to hold a fair on the vigil and day of St. Andrew each year at his manor of Hitchin (Fine Roll, 6 Hen. III, Pt. 1, m. 9).

(97) 1269. Inquisition made of the Manor of Hiche on the death of John de Baliol (Inq. Post. Mort., 53 Hen. III, No. 43).

(98) 1290. Inquisition upon the death of Dervorgoil de Baliol (Inq. Post. Mort., 18 Edw. I, No. 28).

(99) 1301. Grant of £100 a year out of Hitchin Manor to Roger L'Estrange (Exch. K.R. Extents, Herts, 396; Feudal Aids, ii, 428).

(100) 1311. Grant in tail-male to Robert de Kendale (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1307–1313, pp. 79, 133, 139).

(101) 1312. Geoffrey de la Lee and his View of Frankpledge at Baldock (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1307–1313, p. 535).

(102) 1317. Revolt of Robert de Kendale's tenants at Hitchin (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1319–1321, p. 86).

(103) 1318. Grant to Robert de Kendale of a fair on the vigil, day and morrow of the decollation of St. John the Baptist, 28–30th August (Chart. R., 2 Edw. II, No. 11).

(104) 1351. Appointment of Sir Edward de Kendale as one of the eight Justices 'to keep the Statute of Labourers in the County of Hertford' (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1350–1354, p. 85).

(105) 1351. Fines paid at Hitchin for offences under the Statute of Labourers (Lay Subsidies R., Herts, Bundle 120, No. 29).

(106) 1368. Grant to Edmund de Chesthunte out of Hitchin Manor (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1367–1370, p. 180).

(107) 1375. Grant out of Hitchin Manor to William of Wykeham and others (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 293, 49 Edw. III, Pt. 2, m. 23).

(108) 1376. Grant of Hitchin Manor to Alice Perrers, the King's mistress, for her life (Chanc. Inq. Post. Mort., 1 Ric. II, No. 30).

(108*a*) 1380. Grant out of Hitchin Manor to Sir Hugh Segrave (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 307, m. 4).

(109) 1387. Grant out of the Manor to Edmund Langley, Duke of York (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1385–1389, p. 292).

(110) 1402. Inquisition upon the death of Edmund, Duke of York (Inq. Post. Mort., 3 Hen. IV, No. 36, m. 21).

(111) 1427. Inquisition on the death of Thomas, Duke of Exeter, concerning the Manor of Maidencroft within the Manor of Hitchin (Inq. Post. Mort., 5 Hen. VI, No. 56).

(112) 1459. Appointment of Sir John Say as Steward (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1452–1461, p. 571).

(113) 1460. Appointment of Alexander Dover as receiver of Hitchin Manor on the rebellion of Richard, Duke of York (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 38 Hen. VI, Pt. 2, m. 22).

(114) 1461. Grant to Thomas Hardgrove out of Hitchin Manor (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1461–1467, p. 127).

(115) 1461. Grant of the Manor by Edward IV to his Mother Cecily, Duchess of York, for her life (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1 Edw. IV, Pt. iv, m. 1).

(116) 1461–1462. Accounts of Sir John Sturgeon as bailiff (Ministers' Accounts, 870, 4 and 5).

(117) 1471. Minutes of the Court of the View of Frankpledge held on 24th and 25th October, 1470, and 23rd July, 1471 (Court Rolls, Portf. 177, No. 40. Copy and translation with the Seebohm papers).

(118) 1488. Appointment of Sir Roger Cotton as Steward (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1485–1494, p. 236).

(119) 1491. Grant by Hen. VII of the reversion of Hitchin Manor to his queen Elizabeth (Cal. Pat. Roll 7, Hen. VII, m. 8).

(120) 1509. Grant by Henry VIII of Hitchin Manor to Princess Katherine of Arragon on his marriage with her (L. and P., Hen. VIII, 1. 155).

(121) 1509. Account of John Riecroft as bailiff (Ministers' Accounts, 24 Hen. VII to 1 Hen. VIII, No. 61).

(122) 1527. Accounts of John Smyth as Bailiff (Ministers' Accounts, 1584, 18–19 Hen. VIII).

(123) 1534. Grant by Henry VIII of Hitchin Manor to his queen Anne Boleyn as part of her dowry (L. and P., Hen. VIII, vii, 352). The reference to Jane Seymour as lady of the manor is L. and P., Hen. VIII, xii, Pt. 2, 341.

(123*a*) 1537. Extracts from the Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, relating to Sir William Coffin. (See more particularly Vol. xii, Nos. 457, 586, 680, 812, 1279, and Vol. xiii, No. 711.)

(124) 1539. Appointment of Sir Ralph Sadler as Steward and Bailiff (L. and P., Hen. VIII, xiv (2), g. 780. 42).

(125) 1557. The Manor of Hitchin, parcel of the possessions of Jane, late queen of England. A survey taken there by the Commissioners of the lords, the King and Queen 17th August, the 3rd and 4th years of the reign of King Philip and Queen Mary (Aug. Off. Bks., Vol. cccxci, fos. 61–74).

(126) 1579–1641. Accounts of successive bailiffs of the Manor found amongst the Estreats of Court Rolls for Essex and Herts, viz.: 1579, 1582, 1587, 1589, John Vizakerley, Nos. 199, 200, 237, 239; 1590, 1591, 1592, 1596–7, Thomas Docwra, Nos. 201, 203, 239, 247; 1595, 1598, Thomas Chapman, No. 203, and Bundle 61, No. 857; 1607, John

Skynner, No. 240; 1611, Thomas Chapman, No. 207; 1620, 1626, Edward Halsey, Nos. 241, 243; 1639, 1641, Andrew Kingley, Nos. 212, 250.

(127) 1603. Grant of Hitchin Manor by James I to his Queen Anne (B.M., Add. MSS., 6693, fol. 73).

(128) 1603–1604. Letters between Lord Robert Cecil and Thomas Docwra, Steward, as to the holding of Courts to prevent the disturbance of the Bailiffs in their office (Cal. S.P.D., Jas. I, Vol. iv, 88; Vol. vi, 48, 49, 108).

(129) 1608. A Survey, View and Value taken and made of all and singular the King's Majestie's trees which are Tymber and of other great trees which are not tymber and of all dead and decayed trees (B.M., Add. MSS., 16273, f. 1 *et seq.*).

(130) 1616–1927. Court Rolls of the Manor of Hitchin. (*a*) For the Courts held in 1616, 1624, 1629, see Estreats of Court Rolls, Nos. 209, 211, 245, respectively. (*b*) For 1621, see Land Revenue Court Rolls, portfolio 177, No. 41. (*c*) For those held from 1672–1796, with one gap from 1697–1720, see Land Revenue Court Rolls, Nos. 22–29. (*d*) Transcripts from this period and rough minutes, with some breaks, from 1650 to 1860, are preserved in the offices of Messrs. Hawkins & Co. See No. 162 below. (*e*) The rolls for 1796–1827 are in the same hands. (*f*) Those since 1827 are in the custody of P. Marr Johnson, of 39, Lombard Street, E.C. 3, the present Deputy Steward.

(131) 1619. Grant of Hitchin Manor to trustees for the use of the Prince of Wales (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 17 Jas. I, Pt. 1, No. 4).

(132) 1619. Sale of the timber on Hitchin Manor to the tenants (B.M., Add. MSS., 16273, f. 1 *et seq.*).

(133) 1647. Petition of divers knights, gentlemen and other inhabitants of the County of Hertford made to Sir Thomas Fairfax, Captain Generall of the forces raised for the preservation of the Kingdome. See reference to copyhold tenants in Clause 5 (Thomason Tracts, E. 393 (7)).

(134) 1650. Survey of the Manor of Hitchin by Thomas Marsh, Alexander Rowley and William Daniell, Parliamentary Commissioners (Aug. Off., Parliamentary Surveys, Herts, No. 22).

(135) 1650. Grant of Hitchin Manor to Samuel Chidley for the sum of £1,874 14s. 6d. (Aug. Off., Particulars of the sale of Estates of Charles I, Herts, G. 9).

(136) 1667–1668. Resumption of possession of the Manor by Henrietta Maria (Cal. S.P.D., 1667–8, p. 89).

(137) 1676. Survey of the Manor of Hitchin (Land Revenue Court Rolls, Bundle 22, No. 4). N.B. A very minute and valuable description of the Manor, which in the transcript made for Frederic Seebohm runs to 150 pages.

in folio. Especially valuable for the field names and description of copyhold tenants. Copy in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.

(138) 1689. Lease of the Manor to the Right Hon. John, Lord Holles for 75 years (Land Rev. Misc. Books, cliii, fol. 16).

(138*a*) 1718. Sworn statement of John Draper and George Lyle (Treasury Papers, Vol. ccxxvii, fols. 175–6).

(138*b*) 1720. The memorial of James Bogdani (Treasury Papers, Vol. ccxxvii, No. 30).

(139) 1723. Terrarium et Rental Maneri de Hitchin, Portman and Forrein in com Hertford tent. in ffirma de Domino Rege per me Mauritiu Johnson. N.B. This manuscript, now in the keeping of Reginald L. Hine, gives a description, field by field, of the tenants' holdings, and particulars of quit-rents, licences, fines, etc. It has been revised by successive stewards up to the year 1768.

(140) 1745. Account of the death of George Draper, steward of the Manor of Hitchin (Gentleman's Magazine, p. 502).

(141) 1755. Obituary notice of Maurice Johnson, steward (Gentleman's Magazine, p. 92).

(142) 1771. Obituary Notice of William Bogdani, Lord of the Manor (Gentleman's Magazine, p. 571).

(143) 1773. Patent of the Stewardship of the Manor granted by William Maurice Bogdani to Walter Johnson and Richard Tristram (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(144) 1774. Surrender out of Court of Henry Thrale and Hester Lynch Thrale, afterwards Mrs. Piozzi—Dr. Johnson's friend (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(145) 1777. The History of the life of King Henry I and of the age in which he lived. George, Lord Lyttleton. Ref. John de Baliol's lordship of Hitchin, Vol. ii, p. 213.

(146) 1819. Survey of the Manor with its rights, customs and regulation of commons. (Entered on Court Rolls. Printed in full as an appendix to Seebohm's *English Village Community*.)

(147) 1839. Account of the scourging of John de Baliol and the foundation of the College at Oxford (Chronicon de Lanercost, ed. 1839, Vol. xlvi of Maitland Club, p. 69).

(148) 1872–1882. Chronica Majora, Matthæi Parisiensis. Ed. by H. R. Luard. See more particularly Vol. ii, 533, and Vol. iii, 33, 364–5.

(149) 1885–1900. Accounts of (*a*) Bernard de Baliol; (*b*) Edward de Baliol; (*c*) Henry de Baliol; (*d*) John de Baliol; (*e*) James Bogdani; (*f*) Sir Richard Fanshawe; (*g*) John Holles, Duke of Newcastle; (*h*) Sir Robert Howard; (*i*) Charles Blount, 5th Baron Mountjoy; (*k*) Sir Ralph Sadleir; (*l*) Sir John Say; (*m*) Sir Hugh Segrave (Dict. Nat. Biog. in the vols. of their alphabetical order).

(150) 1890. The Village Community. George Lawrence Gomme. Refs. to Hitchin Manor, pp. 66, 77, 85, 157, 163, 294.
(151) 1892. Villainage in England. Paul Vinogradoff, p. 394.
(152) 1899. An account of the Manor in 1869 (Report on the MSS. of J. M. Heathcote at Conington Castle, p. 256).
(153) 1900. Pedigree and biographical notes of the families of Docwra, sometime Stewards of Hitchin Manor. H. L. Ormsby. (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)
(154) 1905. The Open Field System at Hitchin (Transactions of the Royal Hist. Soc., Vol. xix, New Series, p. 104).
(155) 1906. The Royal Manor of Hitchin and its Lords, Harold and the Baliols. Wentworth Huyshe, with illustrations by F. L. Griggs and D. Macpherson. No index.
(156) 1906. The Domesday Inquest. Adolphus Ballard, 3, 116, 206, 217; and see also under Seebohm.
(157) 1906. Manor and Manorial Records. Nathaniel J. Hone, p. 39.
(158) 1909. Domesday Tables for the counties of Surrey, Berkshire, Middlesex, Hertford, and others. Francis Henry Baring. Hitchin refs., pp. 96–100, 102, 106, 107 and 123.
(158*a*) 1912. The Bogdani Family: lords of Hitchin Manor. Herbert C. Andrews (Notes and Queries, XI, s. v, pp. 441–2).
(159) 1913. Dervorgilla, Lady of Galloway. Wentworth Huyshe. Ref. to Hitchin, p. 22.
(160) 1914. The Norman Balliols in England. Benjamin L. Scott. See Index under Hitchin.
(161) 1926. An account of John de Baliol and Dervorgilla his wife (John Wyclif. Herbert B. Workman. Vol. i, pp. 70–73).
(162) 1926. Extracts from the draft minutes of Hitchin Manor Court Leet and Court Baron, preserved in the offices of Messrs. Hawkins & Co. The minutes cover the period from 1650–1860. (MSS. numbered and filed, in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)
(163) No date. Copy of the charge usually delivered to the Court Baron of Hitchin (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).
(164) No date. List of Manors in Anne of Denmark's Dower (Jas. I) (Lodge's Illustrations of British History, Vol. iii, p. 219).

THE CHURCH

(165) 1220–1821. References to the Vicarage and the Perpetual Vicars of Hitchin found amongst the Episcopal Records at Lincoln. Extracted and annotated by Canon C. W. Foster, F.S.A. Some have been printed in the several volumes of the Lincoln Record Society. (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)
(166) 1291. Return of the value of Hitchin Vicarage, with the Chapels of Dynesle and Wimundele for the Ecclesiastical taxation ordered by Pope Nicholas IV (Tax. Eccles., p. 36).

(167) 1301. Order by the Bishop of Lincoln that the parishioners of Hitchin should repair the belfry; and excommunication of certain persons who had appropriated material set apart for the restoration of the Church (Linc. Epis. Reg., Dalderby, fol. 44*d*).

(168) 1305–1821. Entries relating to Hitchin in the registers of the Bishops of Lincoln. Extracted for the author by Canon C. W. Foster, F.S.A. (MSS. filed and numbered, in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(169) 1392. Licence to Sir Robert Turk and others to found a chantry in St. Andrew's, Hitchin (Cal. Pat. Roll, 16 Ric. ii, Pt. 1, No. 336).

(170) 1464–1558. Wills of Edmund Browne, Arch. Hunts, 1. 11; James Tydye, Arch. Hunts, 11. 193; John Wyytt, Arch. Hunts, 3. 43; John Pulter, P.C.C. 3 Milles; William Papworth, Arch. Hunts, 2. 222; Agnes Lyndesey, Arch. Hunts, 4. 128; Valentine Hawys, Arch. Hunts, 11. 310; James Cheetham, Arch. Hunts, 2. 262; John Rogers, P.C.C. 21 Adeane; Robert Marshall, Arch. Hunts, 10. 5; William Chambers, P.C.C. 21 Ayloffe; Lawrence Bertlott, P.C.C. 3 Wattys; John Leslay, Arch. Hunts, 12. 120; Thomas Wynch, Arch. Hunts, 4. 32; Agnes Hemmyng, Arch. Hunts, 4. 128; Edward Trycotte, Arch. Hunts, 6. 164; John Rolfe, Arch. Hunts, 10. 107; John Lawe, Arch. Hunts, 11. 293; Elizabeth Fryday, Arch. Hunts, 12. 120; John Sturgeon, P.C.C. 18 Dogett. Full copies of these wills are in the possession of Reginald L. Hine. He has in addition taken copies of 140 Hitchin wills registered in the P.C.C. and at Peterboro'. Most of them make some bequest to the Church. These copies will be bound up in alphabetical order and preserved for the use of students.

(171) 1474. Epitaph on John Sperehawke, sometime Vicar of Hitchin (Bodleian MSS., Rawl. D. 1090, 112*b*).

(172) 1475. The foundation of the gild or fraternity of St. Mary and the grant of two fairs, each of three days' duration, on Wednesday in Easter Week, and on the feast of the Translation of Edward the Confessor, 13th October (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1467–1477, p. 542).

(173) 1517–1607. Notes of the Episcopal Visitations at Hitchin. Taken from the records at Lincoln by Canon C. W. Foster, F.S.A. (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(174) 1535. Valuation of the Vicarage of Hitchin and the Chapel of Minsden upon the Dissolution of Religious Houses (Bacon's Lib. Reg., p. 520).

(174*a*) 1539. Surrender of Elstow abbey (L. and P., Hen. VIII, xiv (2), 88).

175) 1543. Reports of Henry Malette, vicar, Nicholas Dyer, curate, Thomas Crosdale, cantarist, Thomas Wright and John

Cook, pensionaries, and John Butler, chantry priest (Lincoln Diocesan Registry, Liber Cleri, Deanery of Hitchin, f. 16*d*).

(176) 1547. Grant of the Manor of the Rectory of Hitchin to the Master, Fellows and Scholars of Trinity College, Cambridge (Cal. Pat. Roll, 38 Hen. VIII, Pt. 6, m. 19).

(177) 1548. Grant of the Gild, the Brotherhood House, the Swan, and the fair to Ralph Burgh and Robert Beverley (Cal. Pat. Roll, 2 Edw. VI, Pt. 4, m. 27).

(178) 1551. Report on the religious fraternity in Hitchin called the Brotherhood (Chant. Certif., 2 Edw. VI, Co. Herts, Roll 20, No. 72 ; and see Roll 27, No. 17).

(179) 1552. Inventory of all the goods and furniture in the parish Church at Hitchin (Augment. Off. Miscell., Vol. ccccxcvii, Rec. Off.).

(179*a*) 1552. Sale of the ' Chauntery House ' to Thomas Stevens (Cal. Pat. Roll, 3 Edw. VI, Pt. 4, m. 17.)

(180) 1552. Certificate of the delivery to Sir Francis Jobson for the King's use of 2,003 ounces of gilt-plate, parcel gilt and white plate from the Church of St. Mary, Hitchin (Add. Ch., 1995).

(181) 1590. A sermon preached at Hitchin by Edmond Harris on the 17th November, 1587. Printed by John Morris and J. B. dwelling in St. John Street. The Brand-Heber copy of this rare pamphlet was sold at Sotheby's in 1926.

(182) 1590–1596. Act Book of the Archdeaconry of Huntingdon, amongst the muniments of the Archdeaconry of Bedford deposited at the Shire Hall, Bedford, A.B.C., No. 15. It possesses a subject index only ; but short notes of the Hitchin entries have been made and numbered by the author.

(183) 1602. Petition of John Dermer of Hitchin against the injurious conduct of Daniel and Edward Hurst, farmers of the parsonage and tithes of Hitchin (Chancery Proc. Eliz., Bundle D, d. 3, No. 38).

(184) 1617. John Chapman to Edward Harolde. Mortgage to secure £100. (Deed in possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(185) 1625. A Terrier of the Gleabe belonging to the Vicaridge of Hitchin (Lincoln Episcopal Registry Terriers, Book VIII, Folio 603).

(186) 1638. A Terrier of the Hitchin Glebe (Archdeaconry of Huntingdon MSS., 4. This has been printed by William Briggs in the Herts Genealogist, Vol. iii, pp. 117–118).

(187) 1685. Notice of the intended Assignment of a pew to Ozias Rainsford of Hitchin ' wherein he, his wife and his children may sitt, stand, kneele and pray and heare divine service and sermon ' (Archdeaconry of Huntingdon MSS. 7, 8).

(188) 1686. A true Terrier of the glebe lands belonging to the vicarage of Hitchin (St. Mary's MSS., 1).

(189) 1696. Faculty for the assignment of a seat in St. Mary's to Thomas Papworth (St. Mary's MSS., 2).

(190) 1699. A Minister's Counsel to the Youth of his Parish when arrived to years of Discretion. Recommended to the Societies in and about London. By Francis Bragge, B.D., Vicar of Hitchin in Hertfordshire.

(191) 1701. Certificate by John Dimsdale, Thomas Knowlton and Joseph Thompson that Mary Burrows of Hitchin had practised as a midwife with very good success (St. Mary's MSS., 3).

(192) 1707. Letters from Francis Bragge to Sir Ralph Radcliffe concerning the repairs to the Radcliffe chapel (Priory MSS., 43–5).

(193) 1707–1845. Faculty Book for the Archdeaconry of Huntingdon. References to Hitchin, pp. 18, 45, 60, 74, 77, 98, 159, 188 (MS. in the possession of William Onslow Times).

(194) 1709. Certificate of George Wakeman, senior, George Wakeman, junior, and S. Thompson as churchwardens that Robert Taylor of Hitchin was duly qualified to practise the art of Physiche and Surgery (St. Mary's MSS., 4).

(195) 1734. Opinion of Dr. Strahan in the case of a Churchwarden setting down a post in the Churchyard of Hitchin to prevent coaches going upon the Walkes and the cutting the same down by a Gentleman (St. Mary's MSS., 5).

(196) 1746. Account of the Church by the Rev. William Cole (B.M., Add. MSS., 5836, f. 106).

(197) 1749. Notes on the family, religious writings, and epitaph of William Papworth, buried in St. Mary's church. Addressed by E. Umfreville to Dr. Rawlinson (Bodleian Lib. MS. Rawlinson, c. 226).

(198) 1755. Epitaphs collected by Dr. Rawlinson. One on Canon John Sperhawke of Hitchin (Bodleian Lib. MS. Rawlinson, D. 1090).

(199) 1772. Obituary notice of the Rev. Mark Hildesley, sometime vicar of Hitchin (Gentleman's Magazine, p. 599).

(200) 1790. Charge to the clergy of the Diocese of London. Bishop Porteus.

(201) 1799. Memoirs of Mark Hildesley, D.D. The Rev. Weeden Butler.

(202) 1799–1827. Vestry Minute Books, Vol. i, 1799–1811; Vol. ii, 1811–1827. (In the possession of Messrs. Hawkins & Co.)

(203) 1821. Papers relating to the erection of a gallery in the South Aisle and allotment of seats in the same (St. Mary's MSS., 6).

(204) 1824–1846. Banns of Marriage to be celebrated in Hitchin Church (St. Mary's MSS., 7).

(205) 1827–1841. The Ringers' account book of Receipts and payments (St. Mary's MSS., 8).

(206) 1830–1832. Four paintings of St. Mary's Church by J. C. Buckler. (In the possession of C. J. Hegan.)

(207) 1838. An account of Hitchin Church with two drawings by W. P. Griffiths (MS. in the Herts County Museum: Lewis Evans's collection).

(208) 1840. Rubbings of the brasses remaining in St. Mary's Church. Joseph Ransom. (Now, by the gift of Mrs. Grace, in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(209) 1847. Perpendicular work in Hitchin Church (Handbook of English Ecclesiology, App. cxviii).

(210) 1853. Plans of the church of St. Mary, Hitchin, showing the Georgian pews, and galleries. E. C. Hakewill, architect. (Tracings in the possession of Geoffry Lucas.)

(211) 1853. Specification of new pewing and other alterations in the parish church of Hitchin (St. Mary's MSS., 9).

(212) 1864. Three Poems for a Country Church. The first is entitled 'Hitchin Church: a Sermonette in Verse.' Anon.

(213) 1871. A Sermon preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary on June 8th, on the occasion of the opening of a New Organ. By the Rèv. Lewis Hensley, M.A., Vicar of Hitchin.

(214) 1873. Inventory of furniture and ornaments remaining in all the parish churches of Hertfordshire in the last year of the reign of King Edward VI. John Edwin Cussans. Hitchin inventory set out, pp. 59–60.

(215) 1882. Hitchin Church Brasses (The Antiquary, Vol. v, p. 8). Further articles appeared in (1) The Transactions of the Cambridge University Association of Brass Collectors, Vol. ix, p. 15, and Vol. x, pp. 9, 12; (2) The Oxford University Brass Rubbing Society's Journal, Vol. i, pp. 36–7; (3) Herts Mercury, October 5, 1901.

(216) 1883–1902. References to the condition of Hitchin Church in the Transactions of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Monuments, 6th, 22nd, 24th and 25th reports.

(217) 1885–1900. Lives of (1) John de Dalderby; (2) Hugh of Wells; (3) Offa; (4) Sir Henry Parker; (5) Ralph Radcliffe; (6) Andrew Willet (in the Dict. of Nat. Biog.)

(218) 1885. Note on an ancient effigy existing in the parochial church of St. Mary, Hitchin. F. S. Clarkson (St. Albans and Herts Architec. and Arch. Soc. Trans., pp. 28–29).

(219) 1886. The Church Bells of Hertfordshire. Thomas North, F.S.A. See index under Hitchin.

(220) 1886. Words to the tunes selected for the Hitchin Chimes.

(221) 1887. Notes on the Church Plate now existing in the Deaneries of Baldock and Hitchin. Rev. E. R. Gardiner (St. Albans and Herts Architec. and Arch. Trans. Hitchin ref., pp. 31–33).

(222) 1888. Liber Antiquus de ordinationibus vicarium tempore Hugonis Wells, 1209–35. Ed. Alfred Gibbons.

(223) 1889. St. Mary's Church, Hitchin. S. Flint Clarkson (St. Albans and Herts Architec. and Arch. Soc. Trans., pp. 64–70). A further paper on 'The Connection of Hitchin with Elstow,' by the same author, follows that on the Church.

(224) 1890. St. Mary's, Hitchin: Some Points of Architectural Interest. A paper read by Walter Millard before the Hitchin Natural History Club on December 3rd. Printed in the following issue of Herts Express.

(225) 1893–1903. A series of plans and drawings by Geoffry Lucas, illustrating the growth of St. Mary's Church, Hitchin: (1) The original church as it was before the year 1130. (2) The church as it was about the year 1150, showing the possible addition of narrow aisles, with low, thick columns and circular arches. (3) The church as it was about the year 1220, showing the construction of the west tower consequent upon the collapse of the central tower. (4) The church as it was about the year 1300, showing further alterations consequent upon the removal or fall of the central tower, the removal of the chancel apse to obtain a square east end, and of the apses to the side chapels. (5) Development plan of the church 1300–1420, showing strengthening of tower, work done to the arcades, extension of aisles and chancel. (6) Conjectural plan of the whole church as in the fourteenth century. (7) Ground plan of the church of St. Mary as reproduced above, facing page 81. (8) The nave of St. Mary's looking east in medieval times as reproduced above, page 94. (9) The angel screen at St. Mary's as reproduced above, page 88. (10) Diagram plan of the chancel, showing bends in chancel walls. (11) Cross section through nave, looking east. (12) Sketch view of the sanctuary, showing sedilia in medieval times. (13) Sketch view of cross aisle, showing the tomb of Sir John Sturgeon. (14) The tomb of John Pulter. (15) The font of St. Mary's. Printed in the Architectural Association sketch book, New Series, Vol. ii. (16) Details of beam and wall plate in the north nave aisle ceiling, west end. (17) Details of beams, wall plate and tracery in the north nave aisle ceiling, east end. (MSS. in the possession of Geoffry Lucas.)

(226) 1897. The Merchant's Mark of John Pulter, 1421, in Hitchin Church (Oxford University Brass Rubbing Society's Journal, Vol. i, p. 30).

(227) 1900. Inscription on Edward Radcliffe's Memorial (East Anglian Notes and Queries, 3rd Series, Vol. viii, p. 319).

(228) 1901. The Church of St. Mary, Hitchin. Two papers read by Geoffry Lucas and Walter Millard before the East Herts

Arch. Soc. on August 28, 1901, and published in the Society's Trans., pp. 225–259.

(229) 1900. Drawings of the Merchants' Marks on the roofs of St. Mary's, with notes by John Bilson, F.S.A. (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(230) 1901. Bells in Hitchin Church (Herts Mercury, September 7th).

(231) 1902. The Church of St. Andrew of Hitchin, now known as St. Mary's. Three papers read by Geoffry Lucas before the Hitchin Society of Arts and Letters. (MS. in the possession of Geoffry Lucas.)

(232) 1903. Tile found in Hitchin Church. F. W. Phillips (The Connoisseur, November).

(233) 1903. Memorial Brasses in Hertfordshire Churches. W. F. Andrews, pp. 76–80. N.B. There are fourteen rubbings of Hitchin brasses by the author in Hertford Museum.

(234) 1906. Epitome and Index of St. Mary's MSS., made under the direction of Canon H. E. Jones, vicar. Kept with the MSS. in a cupboard in the ringers' gallery.

(235) 1906. St. Mary's, Hitchin, with illustrations by Winifred E. Willis (Church Bells, June 23rd).

(236) 1906. A Manual of Costume as illustrated by Monumental Brasses. Herbert Druitt. See Index under James Hert, John Sperehawke and Hitchin.

(237) 1906–1907. Periodical reports of the restoration of St. Mary's tower by Walter Millard, architect. (See St. Mary's Parish Magazine: December 1906, and January, February, March, April, May, June, and August 1907.)

(238) 1907. St. Mary's Tower. A lecture delivered by Walter Millard on September 21st before the Hitchin Society of Arts and Letters. (Typewritten copy in possession of Reginald L. Hine. See report in Herts Express of following issue.)

(239) 1907. The Brasses of England. Herbert W. Macklin, pp. 122, 123, 167, 212.

(240) 1908. Reference to the Screens in Hitchin Church. Screens. Francis Bond, pp. 56, 58.

(241) 1908. References to the Screen and Font in Hitchin Church. English Church Furniture: J. Charles Cox and Alfred Harvey, pp. 119, 202.

(242) 1909. Chantry certificates for Hertfordshire. J. E. Brown, pp. v, viii, 25, 51.

(243) 1910. Lincoln Record Society. In progress. Extracts of all Hitchin entries have been made by Reginald L. Hine and numbered.

(244) 1910. British Costume during XIX centuries. Mrs. Charles H. Ashdown. Ref. to the brass of James Hert at Hitchin, p. 357.

(245) 1910. English Church Brasses from the 13th to the 17th

century. Ernest Richard Suffling, pp. 20, 251, 280, 355.

(246) 1912. King Offa and Beornred (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. by James Ingram, p. 51).

(247) 1914. Notes on the Crypt and the Ambulatory of St. Mary's, Hitchin (The English Parish Church, J. C. Cox, p. 130).

(248) 1915. List of Rubbings of Brasses preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Hitchin, pp. 18, 19, 26, 60, 67, 68.

(249) 1915. Some Remarks on the Churches of the Domesday Survey. William Page, p. 96 (Archæologia, lxvi, pp. 61–102).

(250) 1917–1926. Materials for the history of Captain Robert Hinde, collected by Reginald L. Hine (MSS., numbered, in the author's possession).

(251) 1917. A list of the Vicars of Hitchin, with biographical notes by the Rev. H. R. Wilton Hall (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine). N.B. This has been revised and enlarged by the author with the assistance of Canon C. W. Foster.

(252) 1918–1926. Materials for a history of the Radcliffe family, collected by Reginald L. Hine. Filed in three portfolios and numbered.

(253) 1920. Rubbings of the medieval graffiti in Hitchin Church. Rubbed and deciphered by Reginald L. Hine.

(254) 1920–1927. Notes and annotations by Walter Millard and Geoffry Lucas upon the history (in MS.) of St. Mary's by Reginald L. Hine. Filed and numbered.

(255) 1925. The Registers of the parish church of St. Mary, Hitchin. H. F. Hatch and Reginald L. Hine (East Herts Arch. Soc. Trans., Vol. vii, Pt. 1, pp. 8–50, and Vol. vii, Pt. 2, pp. 83–104).

(256) 1926. A Brief Note upon the stone used in the exterior and interior work respectively of St. Mary's, Hitchin. Walter Millard. (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(257) 1926. The Valuation of Norwich. W. E. Lunt. For the valuation of Hitchin Church in 1252, see p. 292.

(258) 1926. Extracts made by Reginald L. Hine from the archæological and historical articles that have appeared in St. Mary's Parish Magazine, 1884–1926, edited first by W. O. Times, and since 1918 by the Rev. L. B. Ashby.

(259) 1926. Materials for a history of Francis Bragge, vicar of Hitchin (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine, numbered and filed).

(260) 1926. Memories of church and town life at Hitchin in the first half of the nineteenth century, taken down by Reginald L. Hine from the dictation of Martha Flint, aged 85.

(261) 1926. A list of monumental brasses in the British Isles. Mill Stephenson. Hitchin, pp. 187–188.

(262) No date. Brass rubbings in Hitchin Church made by the Rev. Henry Addington (B.M., Add. MSS., 32490, H. 49, I. 53, 55, SS. 25, 26, V. 3, X. 30). Some further rubbings, including one of Nicholas Mattock, are to be found amongst the Add. MSS., 34894, L. 3–5.

THE PRIORY

(263) 1317. Grant by Edward II to the Carmelite Friars in frank-almoign of a messuage that they might build a church and house there for their habitation (Cal. Pat. Roll, 1313–1317, p. 662).

(264) 1351. Licence to John de Cobham to assign houses and lands to the Order of Carmelites in Hitchin (Inq. a.q.d., 25 Edw. III, file 303, No. 12).

(265) 1491–1530. Wills of John Thurgar (Arch. Hunts, 1. 54); John Middleton (P.C.C. 22, Bennett); Sir John Sturgeon (P.C.C. 18, Dogett); Edward Moody (P.C.C. 22, Holgrave); James Cheetham (Arch. Hunts, 2. 262); Agnes Drake (P.C.C. 3, Blamyr); Thomas Wynch (Arch. Hunts, 4. 32); Edward Trycotte (Arch. Hunts, 6. 164).

(266) 1504. Acts of the Visitation in England of Peter Terasse. Ref. to his visit to Hitchin on November 1st (MS. in the archives of the Calced Carmelites, College of Saint Albert, Rome).

(267) 1509–1547. References to Hitchin Priory amongst the Letters and Papers of Henry VIII. N.B. The denoting volume and page are given on each occasion in the text.

(268) 1525. Notes of the Hitchin Carmelites by John Bale, used afterwards for his *Scriptores*: (*a*) Harleian MSS., 1819; (*b*) Bodleian MSS., 73; (*c*) Selden MS., 41 *supra*; (*d*) Harleian MSS., 3838.

(269) 1543. Three Morality Plays in MS. written by Ralph Radcliffe, Professor of artes and schole maister of Jesus Colleyge in Cambrigge. (This MS., which formed part of the library of Henry VIII, seems to be in the handwriting of the author, and is signed by him as 'your gracys humble subject.' It was at one time in the Porkington Library, and is now in that of Lord Harlech. Copy taken by Reginald L. Hine, who discovered in the thickness of the binding a page from a fourteenth-century missal, and another page from a treatise concerning the legal reforms of Henry III.)

(270) 1546. Report on the condition of the Priory buildings (Aug. Off., Particulars for Grants, file 1190, m. 5).

(271) 1546. Grant of the Priory to Henry Watson and Henry Herdson (Cal. Pat. Roll, 38 Hen. VIII, Pt. 40).

(272) 1548. Illustrium maioris Britanniæ Scriptorum, etc. John Bale. (Contains the lives of the following Hitchin Carmelites: Richard Welwen, Hugh de St. Neots, Peter Stokes, Thomas Walden, and of their successor, Ralph Radcliffe.)

(273) 1553. Grant of Priory and estate to Ralph Radcliffe (Plac. de Banco. Hil., 6 and 7 Edw. VI, M. 15).

(274) 1717 *circa*. As to the grant of a pension to John Butler (Bodleian Lib., Willis MS., 106, f. 60).

(275) 1771. Description and View sent by Robert Hinde of Preston Castle, Hitchin, signing himself 'Hertfordiensis,' to the Editor of the London Magazine, Vol. xl, p. 104.

(276) 1787. Account of Hitchin Priory. Notitia Monastica. Dr. Thomas Tanner and James Nasmith. Hertfordshire, XIII.

(277) 1792. Histoire des ordres religieux. Helyot. I, cc. 40–52.

(278) 1817. Note on the Priory Surrender and Seal by the Rev. Robert Nixon (Archæologia, Vol. xviii, pp. 446–448).

(279) 1846. Dugdale's Monasticon. Edited by Caley, Ellis, and Bandinel. Vol. vii, pp. 982, 1571.

(280) 1858. Fasciculi Zizaniorum, ascribed to Thomas Netter of Walden, edited by the Rev. Walter W. Shirley. For an account of Peter Stokes's controversies with the Lollards at Oxford, see pp. 302–320.

(281) 1858. Monumenta Franciscana. J. S. Brewer. For a satire on Peter Stokes, see pp. 591–601.

(282) 1884. John Wycliffe and his English Precursors. Professor Lechler, pp. 3, 337, 384, 390, 391, 392, 394, 398, 460.

(283) 1885–1900. Accounts of (1) John Bale, (2) Thomas Netter de Walden, (3) Thomas Parrys, (4) Ralph Radcliffe, (5) Peter Stokes, (6) John Bird (Dict. Nat. Biog.).

(284) 1903. An account of Hitchin Priory (Herts Mercury, October 3rd).

(285) 1895–1927. Papers collected by Father Benedict Zimmerman of the Carmelite Priory, Kensington, to serve for a general history of the Order (MSS. in his possession. See refs. to Hitchin Priory in the elaborate indices compiled).

(286) 1905. The Religious Orders in Hitchin. H. P. Pollard and W. B. Gerish (Trans. East Herts. Arch. Soc., III (1), 3).

(287) 1905. Monumenta historica Carmelitana. Father Benedict Zimmerman. See Index under Stokes and Walden.

(288) 1912. Acta Capitulorum Generalium ordinis fratrum. B. V. Mariae de Monte Carmelo. Fr. Gabriel Wessels. See Index under Thomas Netter de Waldensis, John de Berkenstede, Peter Stocis and Hichiae.

(289) 1925. Hitchin Priory: The seat of Mr. Delmé-Radcliffe. H. Avray Tipping (Country Life, October 17 and 24, 1925).

(290) 1926. Preaching in Medieval England. An Introduction to

sermon manuscripts of the period 1350–1450. G. R. Owst. See Index under Thomas Netter of Walden and Peter Stokes.

(291) 1926. John Wycliff: a study of the English medieval church. Herbert B. Workman. See Index under Stokes and Netter.

(292) 1926. The White Friars: an outline Carmelite history. Rev. P. R. McCaffrey. Account of Hitchin Priory, pp. 284–5. And see Index under Dove, Hytchen, Stokes and Walden.

(293) 1926. Letters written by Father Benedict Zimmerman to Reginald L. Hine upon the latter's account of Hitchin Priory and upon Carmelite history in general. (Numbered and filed MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine.)

(294) 1926. Extracts from (1) the Cal. Pat. Rolls and (2) Letters and Papers of Henry VIII (Brewer) relating to Hitchin Priory (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

THE BIGGIN

(295) 1361–1362. Foundation of the Priory of St. Saviour, New Bigging, Hitchin, by Sir Edward de Kendale (Inq. a.q.d., file 340, No. 4).

(296) 1363. Licence to Sir Edward de Kendale to appropriate a grant made by his Mother Margaret of a rood of land at Orwell, Cambs, and of the advowson of the Church there to the warden and chaplains of the Chapel of St. Peter within the parish Church of Hitchin, for the benefit of the prior and canons of New Bigging (Cal., Pat. Roll, 37 Edw. III, Pt. 1, m. 37).

(297) 1372. Grant to the Prior of this house of certain lands in Willian and Hitchin. The grant is made by two chaplains, probably on behalf of Sir Edward de Kendale (Inq. a.q.d., file 377, No. 14).

(298) 1400. Inquisition taken on the death of Sir Robert Turk of the free Chapel in Hycchen called le Bygynge (Inq. Post. Mort., 2 Hen. IV, No. 36, m. 6).

(299) 1402. Licence to the Prior of the Gilbertine Priory of Newbyggyng to choose eight priests to hear confessions and give absolution to penitents who on the feast of the Annunciation visit and give alms for the conservation of the Priory Church (Cal. Papal Letters, iv, 349).

(300) 1472–1654. Wills of John Sperhawke (P.C.C. 19, Wattys); William Chambers (P.C.C. 21, Ayloffe); John Smyth (P.C.C. 13, Maynwaring); William Croocar (11, Holney); Robert Snagge (P.C.C. 31, Stafford); Joseph Kempe (P.C.C. 452, Alchin).

(301) 1536. Petition of Ralph Morice to Thomas Cromwell asking for a lease of the Biggin (L. and P., Hen. VIII, xi, 113, No. 1479).

(302) 1538. Pension of £4 a year to the last Prior, John Mounton (Aug. Off., Misc. Bks., 233, f. 97).

(303) 1544. Augmentation Office particulars and grant upon dissolution to John Cocks, together with a messuage known as Barkers Dalles Place in Bancroft Street and nineteen other houses (L. and P., Hen. VIII, xix (2), 166 (25); xx (2), g. 496 (44); Cal. Pat. Roll, 36 Hen. VIII, Pt. 9, m. 20 (24); Aug. Office particulars for grants, 36 Hen. VIII, file 296).

(304) 1587. Petition of Robert Snagge to the Lord Treasurer of England dated 27th August 'from my pore house in Hitchin' (B.M. Lansd. MSS., 54, p. 65).

(305) 1594. Robert Snag Esqe: Thomas Coker [Cocke] and Eden his wife, as to the manor of Biggin (Feet of Fines, Trinity Term, 36 Eliz.).

(306) 1654. Inscription on the tombstone of Joseph Kempe with translation and notes (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(307) 1662. Memorandum relating to the will of Anna Kempe (Commissary Court of London, Probate Act, f. 65).

(308) 1665–1698. Extracts from St. Mary's registers of the burial of some of Joseph Kempe's pupils (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(309) 1677. 17th May. Appointment of New Trustees of Joseph Kempe's will. Gives a description of the Biggin (Deed in the custody of the Hitchin United Charities Trustees).

(310) 1698–1787. Minutes and receipts for Quit Rents of the 'Court for the Mannor of the Pryor of the Biggin.' The last Court was apparently held in 1747 at the Swan Inn (MSS. in the custody of Messrs. Hawkins & Co.).

(311) 1719–1809. Extracts relating to the relief of Kempe's widows from the Hitchin Overseer's Accounts (MSS. filed and numbered in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(312) 1722. The History of the Antient Abbeys Monastries Etc. For the priory of New Bigging, see Vol. i, pp. 229–230.

(313) 1787. Account of the priory of the Biggin (Notitia Monastica. Dr. Thomas Tanner. Hertfordshire, No. XIII).

(314) 1821. Valuation of the priory of New Biggin, 1538 (Valor Ecclesiasticus, IV, 276).

(315) 1837–1927. Extracts relating to the Biggin from the Minute books of the Hitchin Charities, since 1906 known as the Hitchin United Charities (MSS. filed and numbered in the possession of the author).

(316) 1844. Life of St. Gilbert. Edited by Cardinal Newman.

(317) 1846. Monasticon Anglicanum. Sir Wm. Dugdale. Vol. vi, Pt. 2, p. 982.

(318) 1848–1854. Accounts of Ralph Morice, petitioner to King Henry VIII for the Biggin (Strype's Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer, see Index; and see also Dict. Nat. Biog., xxxix, 46).

(319) 1877. Particulars and rentals of the lands and cottages belonging to John Kempe's Charity (the copy in Reginald L. Hine's possession once belonged to James Hack Tuke and was given by him to George Beaver).

(320) 1885. Notes on the Biggin and almshouses at Hitchin. A paper read by Rev. Dr. Griffith before the St. Albans Archit. and Arch. Society on June 4th. Not printed in Transactions. But see reports in Herts Express and Herts Mercury.

(321) 1885–1900. Lives of (1) Gilbert of Sempringham, (2) Robert Holgate, (3) Thomas Snagge, (4) Ralph Morice, (5) William Kempe (Dict. of Nat. Biog.).

(322) 1896. An extinct Religious Order and its Founders (The Catholic World, lxii).

(323) 1897. Some references to Joseph Kempe and his pupils at The Biggin (Biographical History of Gonville and Caius College, 1347–1897. John Venn. See Vol. i, pp. 371, 402).

(324) 1899. Zöckler in Herzog and Hauck, Realencyhlopädie, vi, 664–665.

(325) 1899. The Builder, p. 548.

(326) 1901. Herts Mercury, December 7th.

(327) 1901. St. Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertines. Rose Graham. To the references in the Index should be added ' founded, 39,' and ' Rauf Morice, 176.'

(328) 1902. A General History of the Kemp and Kempe Families of Great Britain and the Colonies. Fred Hitchin Kemp. Section 3, pp. 59–60.

(329) 1904. The Place-Names of Hertfordshire. Professor W. W. Skeat, p. 68.

(330) 1905. The Religious Orders in Hitchin. H. P. Pollard and W. B. Gerish (East Herts Arch. Soc., III (1), 3).

(331) 1906. Drawing of the Biggin by William Alexander in the possession of Theodore Lucas, Wratten, Hitchin.

(332) 1907. Note on the Ancient Structure known as The Biggin near the Church of St. Mary on the east side of the River Hiz at Hitchin. William Onslow Times. Second edition, 1923.

(333) 1910. Architectural description of the Biggin (Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Hertfordshire, p. 124).

(334) 1910. Biographical Register of Christ's College, 1505–1905. John Peile. Account of Joseph Kempe, Vol. i, p. 341.

(335) 1910. John Capgrave's Lives of St. Augustine and St. Gilbert of Sempringham. Edited by J. J. Munro for the Early English Text Society. Gives a fifteenth-century account of the conventual life and discipline in the Gilbertine Order.

(336) 1922. Alumni Cantabrigienses. J. and J. A. Venn. Accounts of John Felton, Pt. I, Vol. ii, p. 129, and of Joseph Kempe, Pt. I, Vol. iii, p. 5.

(337) 1926. Braie's or Bray's Manor, Willian. H. F. Hatch (Trans. of East Herts Arch. Soc., Vol. vii, Pt. 2, pp. 161–163).

(338) 1926. The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire. A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, p. 213.

(339) 1926–1927. Letters from the Rev. Father Cyril Harlow to the author concerning the Biggin and the possible revival of the Order of St. Gilbert of Sempringham.

(340) 1926. Letters to the author from Walter Millard, at one time consulting architect to the Trustees. Filed and numbered.

(341) 1927. Letters from Miss Rose Graham to the author concerning disputed points on the early history of the Biggin.

(342) 1927. Letter from the librarian of Corpus College, Cambridge, to the author, reporting on the possibility of tracing the manuscript cited by Tanner as proving the double Gilbertine foundation at Hitchin.

(343) 1927. Notes taken from John Moore concerning his repairs to and his early memories of the Biggin and Kempe's widows (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

THE CIVIL WAR AND COMMONWEALTH

(344) 1640–1644. Registers of St. Mary's, Hitchin. A number of entries relating to the burial of soldiers.

(345) 1641. The Doctrine and Conversation of John Baptist. A sermon at a visitation holden at Baldock. Contradicted by many of the auditors. Henry Denne, one of the Hitchin Lecturers (Thomason Tracts, E. 1105, 4).

(346) 1642. An order appointing lecturers for the parish church of Hitchin (Journals of the House of Commons, Vol. ii, p. 681).

(347) 1642. Accounts of payments made to travelling soldiers. Several Hitchin names occur (Herts Quarter Session Rolls, Vol. for 1641–2, Nos. 405–6).

(348) 1642. The Contribucion of the Inhabitantes of the Parish of Hitchin towardes the reliefe of theire afflicted and distressed Brethren the Protestantes in Ireland (Add. Lay Subsidies, 248, No. 18).

(349) 1642–1647. Sundry household, parochial, and military accounts of the period, together with a roll descriptive of the New Model Army under Lord Fairfax (Hitchin Priory MSS. 37, 41).

(350) 1642–1660. Petitions and addresses from the County of Hertford, as signed amongst others by the inhabitants of Hitchin (see the index of the Thomason Tracts, Vol. ii, p. 594).

(351) 1642–1660. Extracts from the Calendar of State Papers (Domestic) relating to Hitchin in the Civil War and Commonwealth (MSS. numbered and filed in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(352) 1643. Account of the escape of Col. Sir John Norris from Bedford to Hitchin (The Parliament Scout, October 20th).

(353) 1643. The necessity and Encouragement for the utmost venturing for the Churche's Help. Herbert Palmer (Thomason Tracts, E. 60, 3).

(354) 1644. September 13th. Letter of Quarter-Master General Ireton from Hitchin to the Earl of Manchester (Manchester Papers, P.R.O. 545, f. 55).

(355) 1644. Petition of the Grand Inquest of the County calling attention to the burden of taxation both on account of the New Militia, and through free quarter (Herts Quarter Session Rolls, 1, 79).

(356) 1644–1645. Letter Book of Sir Samuel Luke, Governor of Newport Pagnell. Contains several letters to and from the Committee for Hertfordshire sitting at Hitchin, and from Colonel Sadleir of Temple Dinsley (Stowe MSS., 190).

(357) 1645. A letter describing the situation of Cromwell and his forces at Hitchin, Royston and Bedford on the eve of Naseby (Mercurius Civicus, June 12th).

(358) 1647. A Bloody Independent Plot discovered. Prosecuted by divers agitators, Levellers and other sectaries to murder the King, divide the army, etc. One of the five committed by the House of Commons was Samuel Chidley, who became Lord of Hitchin Manor (Thomason Tracts, E. 419 [2]).

(359) 1648. Assessment upon the Hundred of Hitchin towards 'the charge of the British army in Ireland' (Exchequer, Lay Subsidies, 248, 21).

(360) 1648. July 11th. A letter signed Isaac Puller and William Plomer sent to the Committee at Derby House giving particulars of the bringing of prisoners taken at St. Neots for safe custody to Hitchin Church (King's Pamphlets, Brit. Mus., E. 452).

(361) 1648. Papers relating to the Compounding of Henry Docwra for being 12 hours with the Parliamentary forces (S.P., Dom. Interregnum, G. 6 and G. 211).

(362) 1649. The Leveller's Designe discovered or the Anatomie of the late unhappy Mutinie presented unto the Souldiery of the Army under the command of his Excellency the Lord Fairfax for the prevention of the like in others. Written by Henry Denne, an Actor in this Tragedy (Thomason Tracts, E. 556, 11).

(363) 1649. Terrier of the landed property of Edward Radcliffe (Hitchin Priory MSS. 77).

(364) 1650. Account of Adjutant-General Thomas Sadleir's campaign in Tipperary and Kilkenny (Official Despatch of Oliver Cromwell to William Lenthall, Speaker of the House of Commons, April 2nd. See Carlyle's Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, Letter cxxx).

(365) 1652. The dissembling Scot set forth in his colours. Samuel Chidley (Thomason Tracts, E. 652, 13).

(366) 1652. A cry against a Crying Sinne: or a just complaint to the Magistrates against them who have broken the Statute Laws of God by killing of men merely for theft. Samuel Chidley (Thomason Tracts, E. 659, 24).

(367) 1653. A Remonstrance to the Valiant Souldier and the rest of the creditors of the Commonwealth concerning the Publique-Faith Souldiers Arrears and other Publique Debts of the Nation. Samual Chidley (Thomason Tracts, E. 692, 5).

(368) 1653. Bells Founder confounded, or Sabianus confuted with his damnable sect. Samuel Chidley. Copy in the Bodleian (G.P. 2314, 4). Not in Thomason.

(369) 1653. Thunder from the Throne of God against the Temples of Idols. Samuel Chidley (Thomason Tracts, E. 688, 2).

(370) 1654. Eight arguments to soldiers to censure those who supported the Protectorate. Paul Hobson (B.M. Add. MSS., 4459, f. 145 *et seq.*, and Rawlinson MS., Bodleian, A. 34, f. 49).

(371) 1655. Letter of Sir John Read, Lord of the Manor of Minsden, and other Commissioners to promote the public peace and weal for Herts to Oliver Cromwell expressing their pleasure at the appointment of Fleetwood as Major General (Bodleian Lib. MS., Rawlinson, A. 36, f. 117).

(372) 1655. Poesie Revived. By John Collop. These poems by a Hitchin man throw an interesting sidelight upon the Civil War and Commonwealth from a Royalist point of view.

(373) 1656. An invective against Cathedral Churches, Church Steeples, Bells, etc. Samuel Chidley (Thomason Tracts, E. 896, 9).

(374) 1657. An address, opposing the scheme of offering the Crown to Cromwell. Samuel Chidley (Thomason Tracts, E. 905, 3).

(375) 1659. Petition of John Dallom, otherwise Joyner, for a pension (Herts. Quar. Sess. Rolls, 1, 129).

(376) 1676. Catalogus Variorum et Insignium Librorum Selectissimæ Bibliothecæ viri Thomæ Kidner, Vicar of Hitchin. Gives an interesting idea of what a Commonwealth minister was reading. The copy in the B.M. is priced. Reference No. 821, i, 1.

(377) 1714. An attempt towards recovering an account of the numbers and sufferings of the Clergy of the Church of England, etc., who were sequestered, harrassed, etc., in the late times of the Great Rebellion. John Walker. N.B. A few Hitchin names occur.

(378) 1721. Petition from the inhabitants of the County of Hertford to the Long Parliament (Rushworth's Historical Collections, Vol. iv, p. 21).

(379) 1761. Account of a conversation between John Milton and Sir Robert Howard, Steward of Hitchin Manor (Life of Milton. John Toland, p. 129).

(380) 1814. Account of Henry Denne, one of the Hitchin Lecturers appointed in 1642 (Joseph Ivimey's History of the English Baptists, pp. 92–98).

(381) 1842. Account of the Garrison at Newport Pagnell (The History of Newport Pagnell. Joseph Staines, pp. 67–97).

(382) 1845. Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches. Thomas Carlyle. The Everyman edition, 1908, has been used for this work.

(383) 1884. Nonconformity in Herts. William Urwick, pp. 213, 286, 635, 636 and 838.

(384) 1885–1900. Lives of (1) Richard Browne, (2) John Dalbier, (3) Henry Denne, (4) Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, (5) John Geree, (6) Herbert Palmer, (7) John Williams (Dict. of Nat. Biog.).

(385) 1886–1891. History of the Great Civil War. S. R. Gardiner. For this work the impression of 1901 has been used.

(386) 1894. Hertfordshire during the Great Civil War and the Long Parliament. Alfred Kingston, F.R.H.S. There are many Hitchin references beyond those noted in the index. The author's collections, of which only a part was used for his book, are now, alas! in the possession of Harvard University.

(387) 1894–1901. History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate. S. R. Gardiner. For this work the edition of 1903 has been used.

(388) 1897. East Anglia and the Great Civil War. Alfred Kingston. Hitchin references on pp. 145, 147, 157, 158, 171, 273, 299.

(389) 1902. Cromwell's Army. C. H. Firth.

(390) 1903. Notes by Mr. E. A. Atkinson of the P.R.O. of Bunyan's service as a private in the garrison at Newport Pagnell (Edmund Venables' edition of The Pilgrim's Progress, pp. xiii–xiv).

(391) 1909. The Puritan Family of Wilmer. Joseph Joshua Green. Contains references to John Wilmer, Puritan Vicar of Hitchin, and Captain Nathaniel Wilmer, who commanded the Hitchin contingent in Ireland.

(392) 1909. Ireland under the Stuarts and during the Interregnum. Richard Bagwell. Refs. to Col. Thomas Sadleir of Temple Dinsley, Vol. ii, pp. 220, 346.

(393) 1910–1911. Letters written by Alfred Kingston to Reginald L. Hine relating to the part played by Hitchin in the Civil War (MSS., filed and numbered, in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(394) 1911. The death of Goring, the wounded Cavalier, at Highdown, Hitchin. See the paper entitled 'High Down, Pirton,'

by Ellen Pollard (East Herts Arch. Soc. Trans., Vol. iv, Pt. 3, p. 233–234).

(395) 1912. The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men in England during the Interregnum. Louise Fargo Brown. Refs. to Paul Hobson, pp. 73, 74, 77, 202, and to Henry Denne, p. 189.

(396) 1913. Ireland under the Commonwealth. Robert Dunlop. Refs. to Col. Thomas Sadleir, pp. 163, 183, 185, 224, 227, 228, 269, 296, 303, 365, 451, 490, 600, 614, 624, 640, 675, 686, 705.

(397) 1918. Account of John Wilmer, Puritan vicar of Hitchin, and Captain Nathaniel Wilmer, his brother. Joseph J. Green (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(398) 1922. The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland. John P. Prendergast. For Colonel Thomas Sadleir, see pp. 119, 130, 132, 145, 163, 218, 305 n., 325 n.

(399) 1927. Letters by H. M. Penn of the College of Arms to Reginald L. Hine as to the baronetcy conferred upon Sir John Reade by Oliver Cromwell.

THE CHURCHWARDENS

(400) 1685–1809. Eight volumes in folio of the Churchwardens' Assessments and Accounts. These are kept in a cupboard in the ringers' gallery of St. Mary's tower. The Epitome and Index to them (see No. 234 above) runs to 75 pages, and gives in full many of the items quoted in this chapter. These MS. volumes were previously stored in the chamber above the south porch, and have not been used or edited before.

(401) 1702–1831. Sundry documents and loose accounts relating to the Churchwardens, Overseers and Surveyors of Hitchin. These, which were previously contained in eighteen packets (see No. 234, pp. 62–70), have been rearranged and are referred to in this work as ' St. Mary's MSS.,' with the denoting number of each item. These MSS. are also kept in the ringers' gallery.

(402) 1926. Extracts from the Herts Quarter Session Rolls, not calendered in Hardy's ' Notes and Extracts ' from the same (72), relating to the Churchwardens, Overseers and Surveyors of Hitchin (MSS., numbered and filed, in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

N.B. The other MSS. made use of in this chapter are described above under Nos. 2, 3 and 202.

THE POOR

(403) 1608. The accounts of Wyllyam Chambers, Rychard Hobbes, and John Audlye, overseers for the poore of the towne of Hitchin (St. Mary's MSS., 19).

(404) 1636–1639. Certificates of local justices as to vagrants, plague, poor relief, apprenticeships, and the fines for ale-house disorder and church absence given to the poor (Cal. S.P. Dom., Car. I: (*a*) Vol. 238, No. 42; (*b*) Vol. 349, No. 70; (*c*) Vol. 351, No. 113; (*d*) Vol. 354, No. 184; (*e*) Vol. 364, No. 74; (*f*) Vol. 385, No. 43; (*g*) Vol. 427, under August 1, 1639.)

(405) 1672–1819. Apprenticeship Indentures of the parish children (St. Mary's MSS., 20–25. See Epitome and Index, p. 59).

(406) 1672–1784. Certificates admitting responsibility for the families removing into Hitchin parish. Two volumes kept in the ringers' gallery. There is a separate index to these.

(407) 1685–1827 Eleven volumes of the Hitchin Overseers' Assessments and Accounts. MSS. in folio. These volumes are kept in a cupboard in the ringers' gallery of the church. Formerly in the chamber above the south porch. They are fully described in the Epitome and Index (234), pp. 7–20.

(408) 1711. Agreements with Thos. Ward, Apothecary, and Joseph Thompson, Surgeon, for medical treatment of the poor of Hitchin (St. Mary's MSS., 27, 28).

(409) 1729. Petition of fourteen ratepayers against the appointment of Thos. Elimer as keeper of the House of Correction (St. Mary's MSS., 29).

(410) 1742. Petition of twenty-one ratepayers against the illegal and unjust behaviour of Thomas Rowley, Overseer (St. Mary's MSS., 30).

(411) 1750–1830. Miscellaneous papers containing copies of the returns to the House of Commons and House of Lords of receipts and expenditure relating to the poor of Hitchin, applications for relief from those in distress, correspondence with overseers of other parishes on questions of settlement, agreements with masters of the workhouse and parish physicians (St. Mary's MSS., 31–62).

(412) 1776–1818. A Volume of 'Orders of Removals.' Kept in the ringers' gallery with the other parish papers. See index, pp. 51–55.

(413) 1794. Certificate of the Right Honourable Lord Clive as to the military service of William Smith of Hitchin in the Shropshire regiment of Militia and [a separate paper] as to the separation allowance payable to his wife (St. Mary's MSS., 63).

(414) 1795–1807. Hitchin Workhouse Papers—Agreements with Masters, Bonds, Inventories of Fixtures and Furniture, and household expenses (St. Mary's MSS., 64–105; and see Epitome and Index, pp. 63, 66).

(415) 1799. Resolutions of a Meeting of the Inhabitants of Hitchin to take into consideration the Necessities of the Poor on account of the high price of bread (Broadside, Thompson Collection, Vol. i, p. 126).

(416) 1801–1835. Lists of Overseers (St. Mary's MSS., 106–110).

(417) 1804. General View of the Agriculture of Hertfordshire. [Arthur Young.] No index, but for Hitchin see pp. 28, 30, 33, 34, 46, 71, 82, 83, 93, 96, 97, 104, 108, 113, 114, 117, 163, 165, 169, 173 and 198.

(418) 1811–1825. Papers relating to (*a*) Survey of Hitchin and its hamlets in 1811 and 1816; (*b*) Regulation of the Boundaries between the parishes of Hitchin and Great Wymondley, 1811; (*c*) Commissioners' determination of the boundaries between the parishes of Hitchin and St. Ippollitts, 1812; (*d*) Scheme for the giving work to unemployed labourers, 1819; (*e*) Census return for the hamlets of Preston, Langley and Charlton, 1821; (*f*) Survey of Langley Hamlet, 1825; (*g*) Census return for Hitchin, 1831 (St. Mary's MSS., 111–143).

(419) 1813–1815. Return of the expense of the maintenance of the poor at Hitchin (Return relative to the expense and maintenance of the poor in England, Vol. xix, p. 179).

(420) 1816–1843. Miscellaneous Papers, including accounts of collection by parish officers of rents from charity lands, bills for leeches, legal opinions on disputed settlements, notices of appeal, lists of unoccupied houses, appointment of assistant overseers, etc. (St. Mary's MSS., 144–176).

(421) 1817. Evidence given by William Wilshere before the Earl of Hardwicke upon the working of the Poor Law in the Hitchin district (Lords' Committees, Vol. v, pp. 87–96).

(422) 1832. Thoughts on improving the agriculture and bettering the condition of the Poor of the County of Hertford in nine letters addressed to the gentry, clergy and yeomanry of the county. William Hawkins, Hitchin, June 11th. Copy in Bodleian.

(423) 1833. Letter from Thomas Hailey of Highover, Hitchin, to the Marquess of Salisbury describing his reforms (Appendix to the first report from the Commissioners on the Poor Laws, A, Pt. iii, 71*a*).

(424) 1837–1847. Rate Books (St. Mary's MSS., 186–201). The subsequent Rate Books are in the custody of the H.U.D.C.

(425) 1844. Papers relating to a call on the parish for £30 to assist emigrants from Hitchin (St. Mary's MSS., 202–206).

THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

(426) 1471–1827. Entries in the Court Rolls of the Manor of Hitchin relating to highway offences and road repairs, extracted by Reginald L. Hine.

(427) 1492–1798. Wills of John Sturgeon (P.C.C. 18, Dogett); Richard Handeleye (Arch. Hunts, 4. 164); John Smyth (P.C.C. 13, Maynwaring); Margerie Astrye (P.C.C. 25 Bodfelde); John Kitlynge (Arch. Hunts, 9. 128); Robert Warner (Arch. Hunts, 10. 84); John Shrimpton (Arch. Hunts, 18. 326); Jonas Kershaw (Arch. Hunts, 24. 28).

(428) 1696. Of repairing and mending the Highways. Wm. Mather.

(429) 1726. An Act for repairing the roads from Lemsford Mill to Welwyn and from Welwyn through Codicote to Hitchin.

(430) 1726. Petition of 187 inhabitants of Hitchin and district against the bad and ruinous condition of the road from Welwyn through Codicote to Hitchin (MS. in the possession of Miss Mary Thompson. Printed in Paternoster's Monthly Advertiser, January 29, 1875).

(431) 1727–1818. Six folio volumes in manuscript entitled 'Surveyors' Book.' These are kept in the cupboard in the ringers' gallery of the church, and are fully described in the Epitome and Index (234), pp. 47–51.

(432) 1730. A genuine narrative of the memorable life and actions of John Everett, written by himself when under condemnation and in his cell in Newgate.

(433) 1741. Advertisement and time-table of the stage coach of John Shrimpton, running from the Grey Hound at Smithfield to the Sun at Hitchin.

(434) 1757. An Act for amending, widening, and keeping in repair the road from the town of Hitchin through Shefford to the town of Bedford. This Act was amended and continued by two later Acts in 1769 and 1790.

(435) 1757–1820. A bundle of papers relating to Hitchin highways in the attics of Messrs. Hawkins & Co.

(436) 1757–1870. Order Books, Minute Books and Surveyors' Account Books of the Hitchin and Welwyn Turnpike Trust, and the Hitchin, Shefford and Bedford Turnpike Trust, 14 folio volumes in all, filed at the County Surveyor's Office at Hatfield. In the custody of Messrs. Hawkins & Co. are two volumes of accounts of the Welwyn Trust and two volumes of accounts by Macadam and his son.

(437) 1763. An Act to continue and render more effectual two Acts of Parliament for repairing the roads from Lemsford Mill through Welwyn and Stevenage and by Cory's Mill to Hitchin; and from Welwyn through Codicote to Hitchin in the County of Hertford (Cap. XXVI).

(438) 1767. Three letters addressed by Robert Hinde to the Surveyor of the Highways (Paternoster's Monthly Advertiser, December 1867).

(439) 1767. Survey of the road from Royston through Baldock and Hitchin to Dunstable.

(440) 1796. Papers relating to the diversion by John Radcliffe of a certain road leading to Charlton (St. Mary's MSS., 207–210).

(441) 1807. Survey and estimate of the cost of the intended new road at Hitchin from Bearton Green to the north end of the Almshouses, by James and Norman Lilborne (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(442) 1810–1820. Extracts from the Minute Books of the Special Sessions of Hitchin Justices sitting at the Sun (MSS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(443) 1815. Cary's New Itinerary. See account of (1) Hitchin, (2) the Leeds Royal Mail coach, (3) the Bedford coach.

(444) 1818. An account of the fatal accident to Kemp, driver of the Bedford waggon, near Hitchin (Mirror of the Times, March 14th).

(445) 1829. Advertisement by Daniel Times, Clerk of the Hitchin and Welwyn Turnpike Trust, of an intended auction at the White Hart Inn, Welwyn, for the letting of the tolls (The Herts, Buntingford, Bedford, Cambridge and Isle of Ely Mercury, December 12th).

(446) 1831. Coaches at Hitchin (London Directory, p. 22).

(447) 1849. The Old Hitchin Coach, by William Lucas (Paternoster's Monthly Advertiser, June 1866).

(448) 1853. Pilgrim's staff found at Hitchin (Journal of the Brit. Archæ. Assoc., Vol. viii, pp. 360–1).

(449) 1868. Statement of the Income and Expenditure of the Welwyn Turnpike Trust.

(450) 1870. A hand-list of the labourers employed in the construction of the new road to the Hitchin Cemetery (MS. in the possession of Reginald L. Hine).

(451) 1877. Sale Particulars of three Toll Houses belonging to the Welwyn Trust with the Turnpike Gates and Fences offered by George Jackson.

(452) 1883. Drawing in ink and colour of The Hirondelle Coach galloping through Bridge Street, by the Rev. and Hon. L. W. Denman (Thompson Collection, Vol. iii, p. 3).

(453) 1893. The Highwayman's Case, Everit *v.* Williams (Law Quarterly Review, No. XXXV, pp. 197–8).

(454) 1909. Hitchin Court-Leet Records. Wm. Onslow Times (Herts Express, February 20th and following issues).

(455) 1912. Roman and Pre-Roman Roads in Hertfordshire. Urban A. Smith. Hitchin refs., pp. 122, 130 (East Herts Arch. Soc. Trans., Vol. v, Pt. 2).

(456) 1913. The Story of the King's Highway. Beatrice and Sidney Webb.

(457) 1915. The King's Highway—a lecture by William Onslow Times, with especial reference to the roads about Hitchin (MS. in his possession).

(458) 1917. The History of Offley Place. Contains several references to the Hitchin coach, *circa* 1683. See pp. 19, 24, 34, 42, 67.

(459) 1918–1919. Letters of Miriam Kershaw to Reginald L. Hine concerning the Kershaw coach (MSS. numbered and filed in his possession).

(460) 1924. A Hitchin Highwayman: John Everitt. Reginald L. Hine (Herts Express, April 19th).

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