



[Valentine & Sons, phot.]

TATTERSHALL CASTLE, LINCOLNSHIRE.

ENGLISH BRICK BUILDINGS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.¹

By the Rev. J. KESTELL FLOYER, M.A. F.S.A.

Bishop Lyttelton, in 1757, probably first gave currency to the statement that no brick was manufactured in England from Roman times until the fifteenth century.² This idea, which held the ground for so long, has now been finally disposed of, chiefly by the publication of the building accounts of the Bar Gate, Beverley, in 1409-1410, by Mr. A. F. Leach.³ The evidence is incontestable, too, of buildings still remaining, such as Little Wenham Hall, Suffolk, built of brick in the thirteenth century; of Coggeshall abbey, in Essex, of the same period; and of Thornton abbey gatehouse, Lincolnshire, about 1382. Other buildings have disappeared in the course of time, for we read that "the town of Kingston-upon-Hull was wonderfully augmented in the time of Richard II," and Leland says that in his time there were four principal gates and twenty-five towers and some houses, all of brick. Holy Trinity church, of the fourteenth century, still remains there of this material, and full details of working the corporation brickyard at Hull appear in the Hull chamberlain's rolls from 1303 onwards.

Though these buildings are for the most part erected in places where Roman brick existed before, which possibly may have furnished some of the material, they provide us with ample proof that brick was made in England throughout the later middle ages.

¹ Read before the Institute, 12th March, 1913.

² *Archæologia*, i (1757), "the Antiquity of Brick Buildings in England in the time of the Romans."

³ *Trans. East Riding Antiq. Soc.* 1896, "The Building of Beverley Bar," by Arthur F. Leach; and "The North Bar, Beverley," by John Bilson, F.S.A.

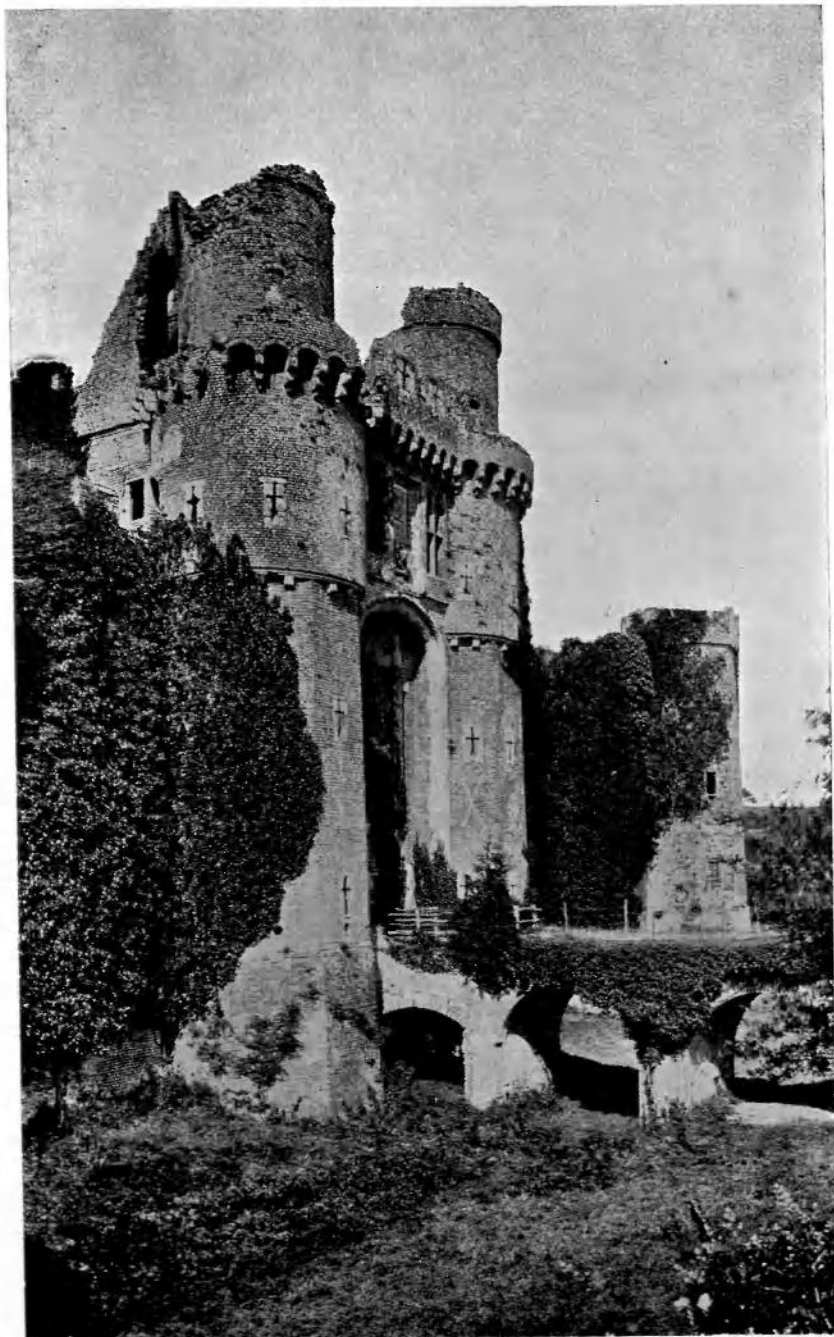
The present paper is concerned with the distinctive characteristics of the great revival of the manufacture of brick for country houses, and the rapid spread of its use. This was not the result of a gradual realisation of its utility, or of a sudden demand for a material in districts where stone and timber were not accessible, but the effect of a new influence and a fresh impulse, which was the outcome of ascertainable historical events. Brickmaking, though not extinct, had gone into disfavour for important buildings. The art was probably at as low an ebb as that of thatching at the present time. It needed the patronage of the wealthy to bring it into popularity again.

Now, in view of this revival, the existence of which is generally recognised, it has been assumed that bricks were imported from Flanders in the fifteenth century, when the trade with the Low Countries was thriving. The bricks of this period are often described by modern writers as Flemish bricks, and we are familiar with the Flemish bond as the name for the method chiefly now used in England for bricklaying. There is, however, a complete want of evidence for this importation. The brickmakers, so far as they are recorded, have English names, or names that may well be English, as, for example, William Veysey, brickmaker at Eton, in 1441. Another point to consider is that the bricks even of the fifteenth-century revival differ somewhat in size, the variations in the same building being probably due to the greater or less shrinkage of the clay, but the variations in different parts of the country almost precluding the idea that they were imported from one factory at all.¹ The explanation is probably that the term Flemish brick is not an old one, and was employed merely as a technical term for the larger sized bricks which came into use with the modern Flemish bond in England.

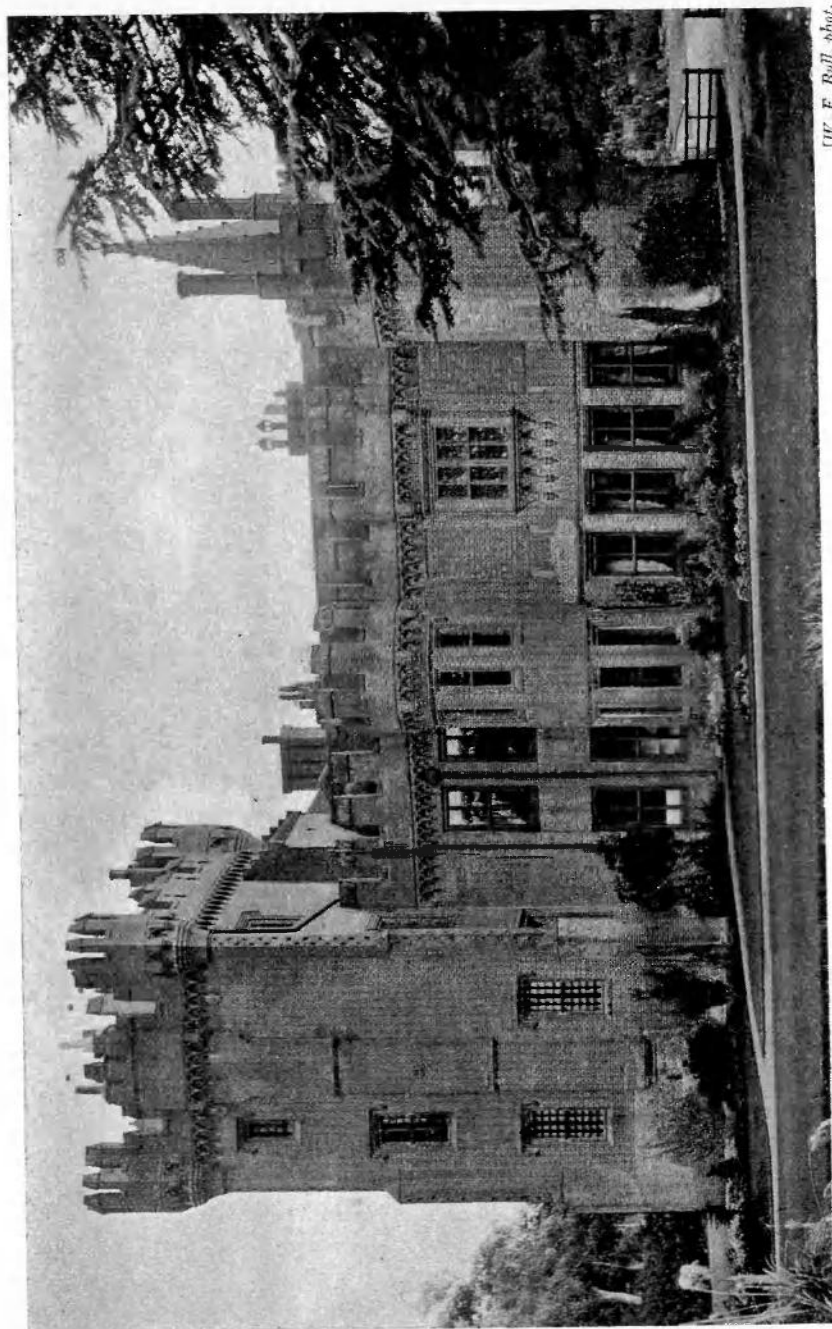
With all these considerations in favour of a revival of the native brick industry in England, we have still to

¹ A comparison may be made of the following sizes: transept of Holy Trinity, Hull (first quarter of the fourteenth century), 9 to $9\frac{3}{8}$ ins. by $2\frac{1}{8}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins; ditto, second quarter of the fourteenth century, $10\frac{1}{4}$ by

2 ins; chancel, 1340, $10\frac{1}{2}$ by $2\frac{3}{8}$ ins. (Bilson). Tattershall castle (c. 1440), average 8 by 2 ins. Hurstmonceaux (1440), average $9\frac{1}{2}$ by $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Downham (c. 1490), average $9\frac{1}{2}$ by 2 to $2\frac{1}{8}$ ins.



[Valentine & Sons, pho.]
HURSTMONCEAUX CASTLE GATEWAY, SUSSEX.



[W. E. Bull, phot.]

FAULKBOURNE HALL, ESSEX.

account for its sudden rise into popularity for country houses of ornamental type, and for the rapid spread of its use in districts where buildings were still standing constructed of stone, timber, rubble, and flint, which had shown their adaptability to a certain elaboration of style, and their durability, for some centuries. We have also to account for a more general adoption of a uniform and regular way of coursing, that is, of the old English bond; for the introduction of diaper patterns worked in black headers; and, lastly, for a new name for an old material, which the dictionaries declare to be of French derivation, in the word "brike."

We will take this last point first. It is only in the fifteenth century that the word brick comes into the English language. Mr. Bilson¹ has shown that though the thing existed before this period, it was called by a different name. The bricks in the Beverley accounts of 1409 are called "tegulae," or, in English, "wall tyles," as distinct from "thack," or roof tiles, and the bricklayer is called "tegulator," or tiler. Murray's *Dictionary* says the word brick is not used in the *Promptorium Parvulorum* of 1440, nor in the *Catholicon* of 1483, a sufficient proof that it was not current in the language, and Dr. Murray finds the earliest mention in 1465 and 1467. The word is found, however, in technical use, and as a word of new importation, a little earlier than this. It appears in the patent rolls of 1422, where a licence is given to crenellate, "cum petris, calce, et 'brike.'"² And again it appears in the building accounts of Eton College of 1441,³ where we find "brike-leggers" employed. These, however, came under the influence of the revival which has already been mentioned, and these Eton buildings will be again referred to.

Again there is evidence to show that most, if not all, of the characteristics which are common to nearly all the country houses in brick of the early fifteenth century, so far as can be judged by their remains, point not to Flemish importation or workmanship, but to a French impulse reviving and developing an English industry. The revival

¹ *Journal R.I.B.A.* 1908, p. 179.

² Quoted in Parker, *Domestic Architecture in England*.

³ Maxwell Lyte, *History of Eton College*.

LIST OF BRICK HOUSES OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

BUILDING	DATE	CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES						REMARKS
		Black Header Patterns.	Moulded Brick.	Large Square Tower.	Hexagonal Turrets.	Corbelled Cornice.	Stepped Gables.	
More, Herts.	Licence 1422	...	...	...	...	...	...	No remains.
Tattershall Castle, Lincs. plate i	1431-49	×	×	×	×	×	×	... ..
Hurstmonceaux Castle, Sussex plate ii	Licence 1440	×	×	×	×	...	×	... ..
Heron Hall, Essex plate iv, no. i	1435-45	×	×	...	×	...	...	Very few remains.
Caister Castle, Norfolk plate v	Before 1459	?	...	...	×	×	...	Very few remains.
Middleton Towers, Norfolk... .. plate iv	Before 1460	?	...	×	×	×	...	... ..
Faulkbourne Hall, Essex plate iii	Licence 1439	?	...	×	...	×	...	... ..
Eton College Cloister, Bucks. plate vii	Begun 1441	×	...	...	...	...	...	... ..
Hatfield Old Palace, Herts. plate ix	Circa 1480	×	×	×	...	...	×	... ..
Esher Place, Surrey plate viii, no. i	1470-80	×	×	×	×	×	×	Stepped gabled buildings destroyed.

BUILDING	DATE	CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES						REMARKS		
		Black Header Patterns.	Moulded Brick.	Large Square Tower.	Hexagonal Turrets.	Corbelled Cornice.	Stepped Gables.			
Wainfleet School, Lincs.	Indenture for Carpenter 1484	×	×	...	×	...	...	...	...	...
Ewelme Almshouses, Oxon....	After 1450	×	×	...	×	...	×	...	...	...
Buckden Palace, Hunts. plate vi, no. 2	1472-94	×	×	×	×	×	...	...	...	...
Nether Hall, Essex fig. 1	Circa 1470	×	×	×	×	×	...	...	...	...
Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk plate x	Licence 1480	×	×	×	×	×	×	...	...	...
Old Hall, Gainsborough	Before 1484	...	...	...	×	×	...	Much added to.		
Lambeth Palace (Morton's Gateway)	Circa 1490	×	...	×	...	...	...	...	...	...
Alcock's Tower, Ely, Cambs. ... plate viii, no. 2	Before 1490	×	...	×	...	...	...	...	...	...
Jesus College, Cambridge	1487-97	×	...	×	...	...	×	...	...	...
Kirby Muxloe, Leicester	1481-4	×	×	×	×	...	...	Much ruined.		
Downham, Cambs.	Before 1490	×	...	×	...	...	×	...	...	...

NOTE.—A handrail of brick or stone in the wall of the newel-staircase, of similar section, exists in Nether Hall, New Hall (near Chelmsford), Tattershall Castle, Esher Place, Kirby Muxloe, Faulkbourne, in the Darcy tower at Maldon, at Eastburg, and East Barsham.

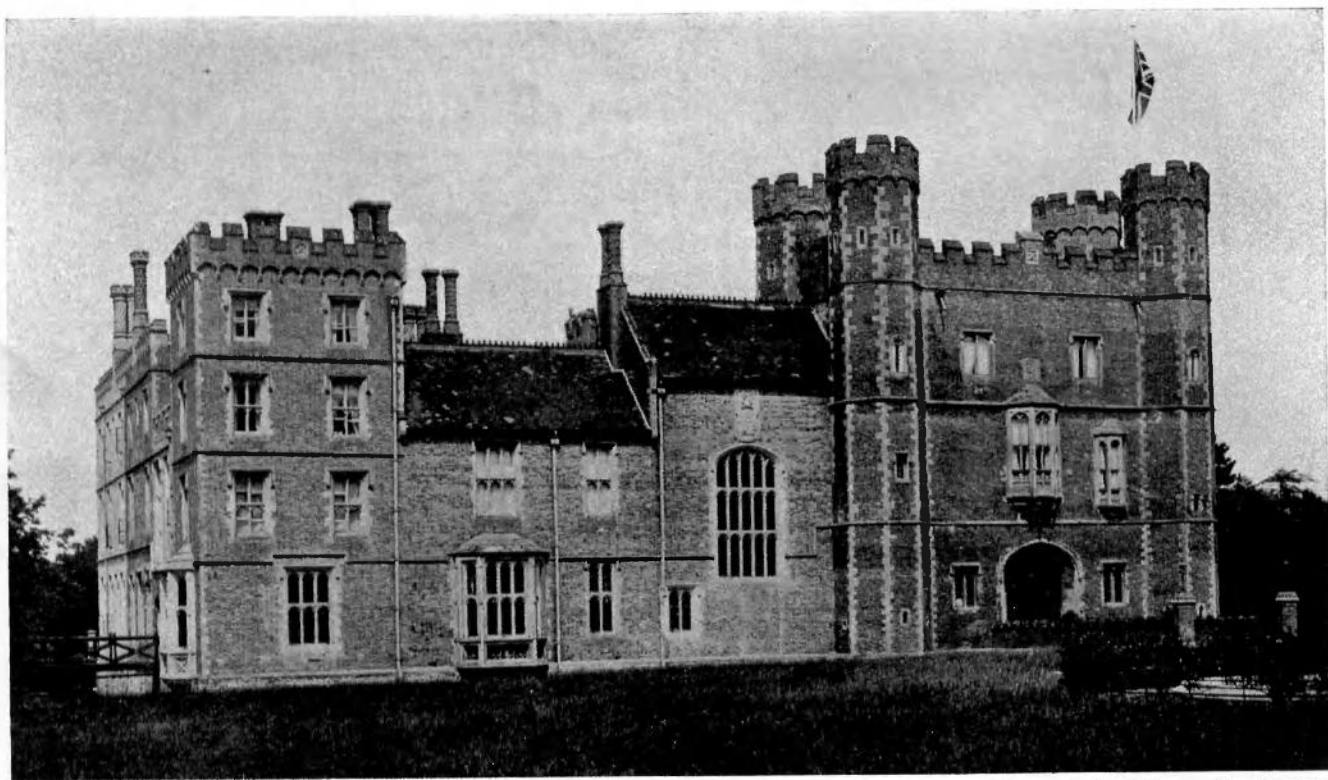
begins with at least six country houses or castles, contemporary in construction, situated in different parts of the kingdom, of which remains exist to-day. They are Tattershall castle, Lincolnshire, built by Ralph, lord Cromwell, and finished by 1449 (plate i); Hurstmonceaux castle, Sussex, built by Sir Roger Fiennes, of which the licence to crenellate is dated 1440 (plate ii); Faulkbourne hall, Essex, built by Sir John Montgomery and his son, of which the licence is dated 1439 (plate iii); Middleton Towers, Norfolk, built by Lord Scales, who was murdered in 1460 (plate iv); Caister castle, in Norfolk, built by Sir John Fastolf, who died in 1459 (plate v); and Heron hall, in Essex, built or partly built by Sir John Tyrrell, who died before 1437 (plate vi, no. 1).

All these houses possess all or nearly all of the characteristics indicated, most of which were unknown, and none of which were common in England previous to their erection. They are built of brick set more or less regularly in the old English bond; there is worked, generally on the front, a pattern in black headers. Moulded brick is used, and a corbelled cornice is a characteristic ornament. The chief portion of the house consists of a large square tower with small hexagonal or octagonal turrets at the corners, and there are stepped gables on the subsidiary buildings.

Another fact that leads us to look to France for the new features is that the builders of all these houses had distinguished themselves in the French wars of the beginning of the fifteenth century, and returned laden with honours and doubtless with spoils. They had all lived for some years in French châteaux, and were familiar with them both from a domestic as well as a defensive point of view.

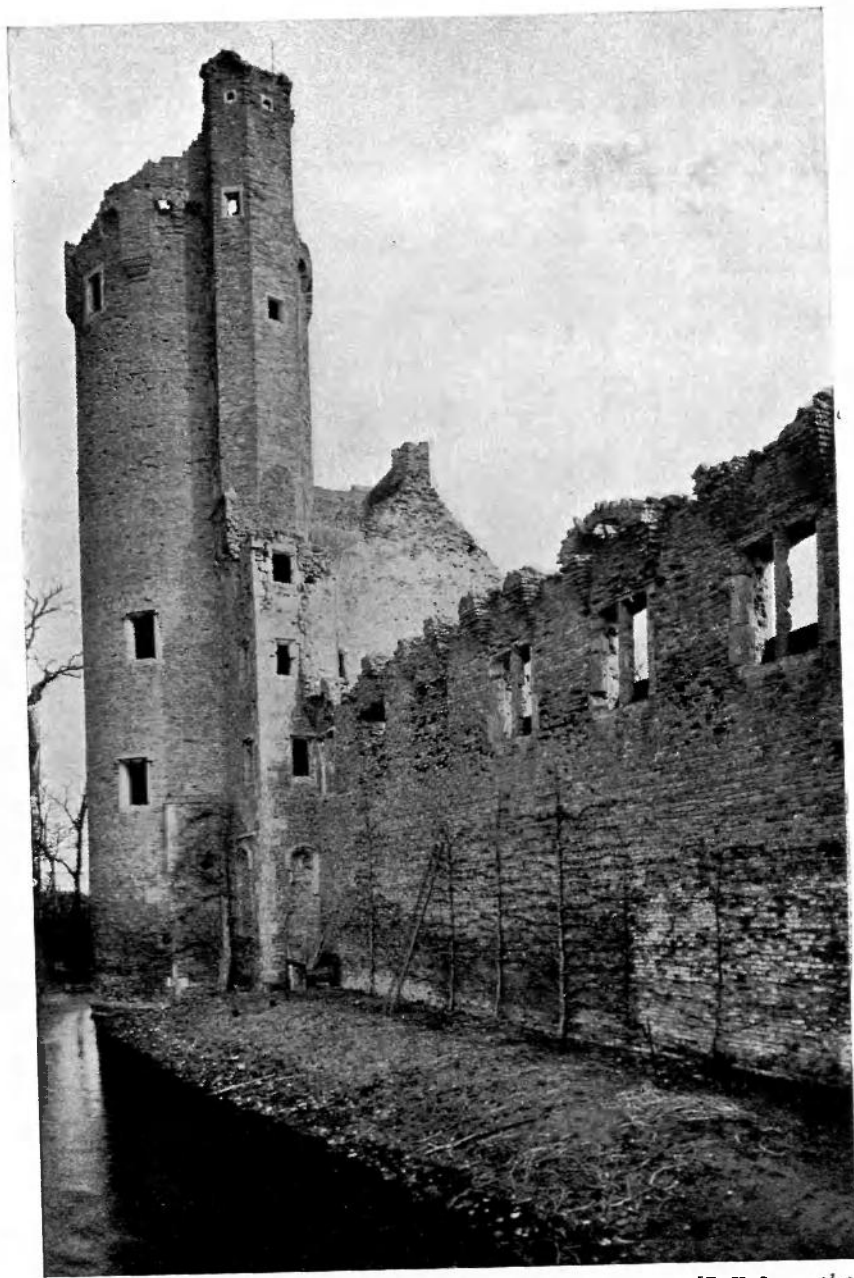
Ralph, lord Cromwell, builder of Tattershall, was in France through most of the reign of Henry V, and was present at the taking of Caen, Courtonne, Chambrays, and other places in 1418. Later he returned to England, and after a sojourn here again went to France in 1436 to negotiate a treaty. Tattershall was the subject of a lawsuit which began in 1424, and terminated in favour of Ralph Cromwell and his wife in 1431.¹ Soon after this

¹ See *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1431.



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MIDDLETON TOWERS, NORFOLK.



[F. H. Sayers, phot.]

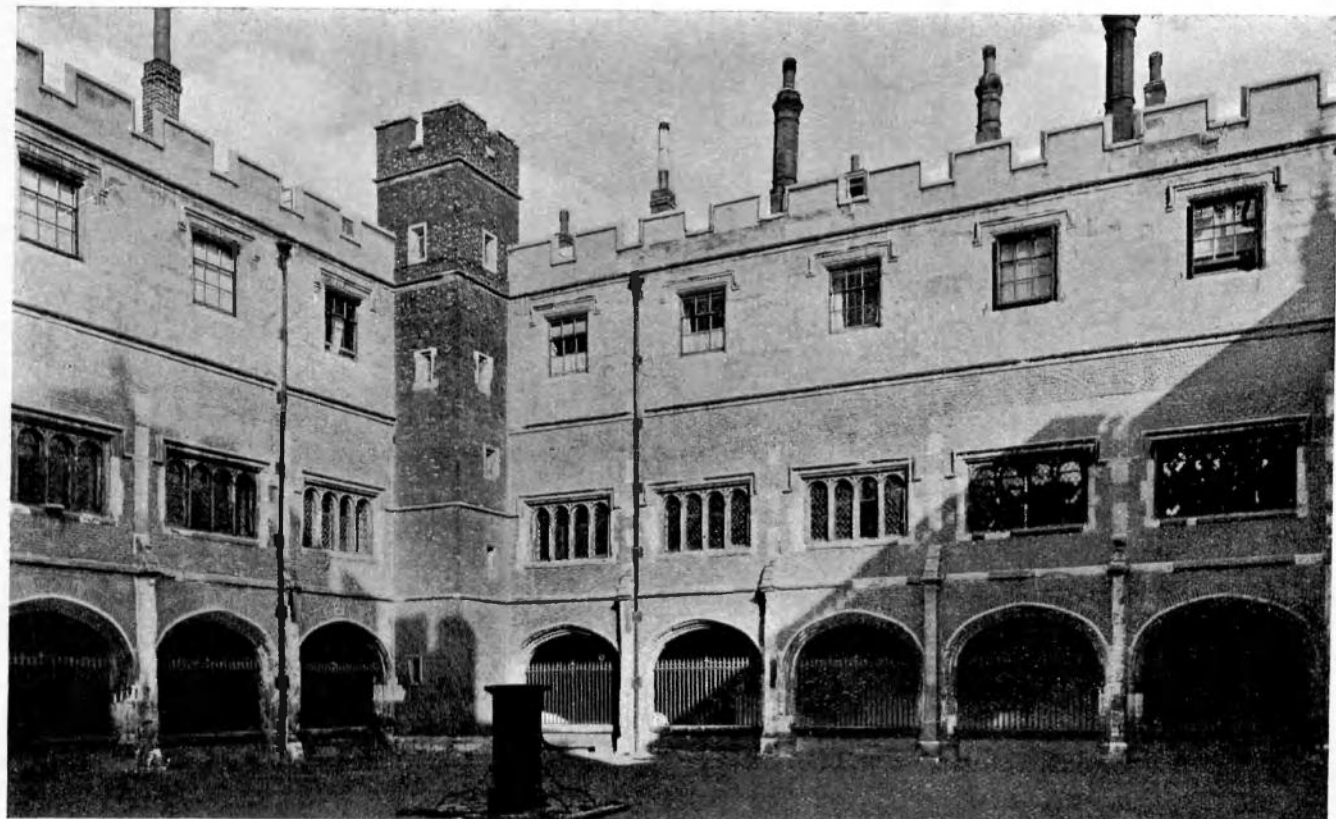
CAISTER CASTLE, NORFOLK.



NO. 1. REMAINS OF HERON HALL, ESSEX.
From a drawing by S. Prout, engraved in *The Beauties of England and Wales*.



NO. 2. BUCKDEN PALACE, HUNTINGDONSHIRE.
From an engraving by Hawkins, after Buck.



[By permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.]

ETON COLLEGE, CLOISTER COURT.

From the Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for South Bucks.

the building of the new castle was probably begun. And we may perhaps date its completion from a paragraph in the annals of William of Worcester,¹ which says that in August, 1449, "Thomas Nevyle, son of the count of Sarum, married the grand-niece (*neptem*) of the lord of Crumwell at Tattershall " . . . and after the marriage, in returning, a great quarrel arose between Thomas Percy, lord of Egremond, and the said count, near York. "It was the beginning of the great troubles in England." By this Worcester appears to mean it was the beginning of the Wars of the Roses. This great wedding in 1449 possibly represents the house-warming, or at all events took place after the completion of the new castle.

Sir Roger Fiennes, builder of Hurstmonceaux, also fought at Agincourt and in the subsequent wars of Henry V, and later, on his return, became treasurer of the household under Henry VI.

Sir Roger Montgomery, builder of Faulkbourne, was at the capture, and afterwards became constable, of Caen, and was made privy councillor to the regent of France, the duke of Bedford.

Lord Scales, builder of Middleton Towers, also served under the duke of Bedford in the French wars, and was made captain of Saint-Jacques-de-Beuvron. He was sent to aid John V against the Duc d'Alençon, was seneschal of Normandy in 1434, took part in the fighting at Meaux and Avranches, and after his return to England was murdered in 1460 while seeking sanctuary at Westminster from Jack Cade's followers.

Sir John Tyrrell, builder of Heron hall, was at Agincourt in 1415, and was made overseer of the carpenters in the defensive works undertaken by Henry V at Calais, and subsequently treasurer of the household to Henry VI.

Sir John Fastolf, the less admirable side of whose character Shakespeare has portrayed, had a very distinguished record as a soldier. He was at the siege of Rouen in 1417 and at the capture of many other of the French towns. He was created knight-banneret on the field of

¹ Annales Wilhelmi Wyrcestre: "The Wars of the English in France, Hen. vj." *Rolls Ser.*

Verneuil in 1424 for having captured the Duc d'Alençon. He arranged with his distinguished prisoner that, as the price of his ransom, and at his own expense, he should raise a castle for Sir John in England like his own at Verneuil. The result of this was Caister castle, near Yarmouth. This story rests on the authority of Grose,¹ the antiquarian of the eighteenth century, who found it in a manuscript then in possession of Mr. Anstis, Garter king of arms, and Grose says it was supported by common tradition. We have here, then, the first direct historical connexion between a French castle and one of these early English ones of brick.

If it be urged against this theory of French origin that the characteristics of these houses are a natural development of an English style, and not an importation, we have to remember that some of these builders constructed more than one house, of which one was in brick, the other in stone. Ralph Cromwell, for example, who built Tattershall, built also South Wingfield in Derbyshire in stone, and Sir William (afterwards Lord) Hastings, who built Kirby Muxloe in Leicestershire in brick, built also Ashby-de-la-Zouch in stone; and South Wingfield and Ashby-de-la-Zouch have none of the distinctive characteristics of the brick buildings, the stone-masons probably being more conservative in their handicraft than those who had to accustom themselves to work in a new material.

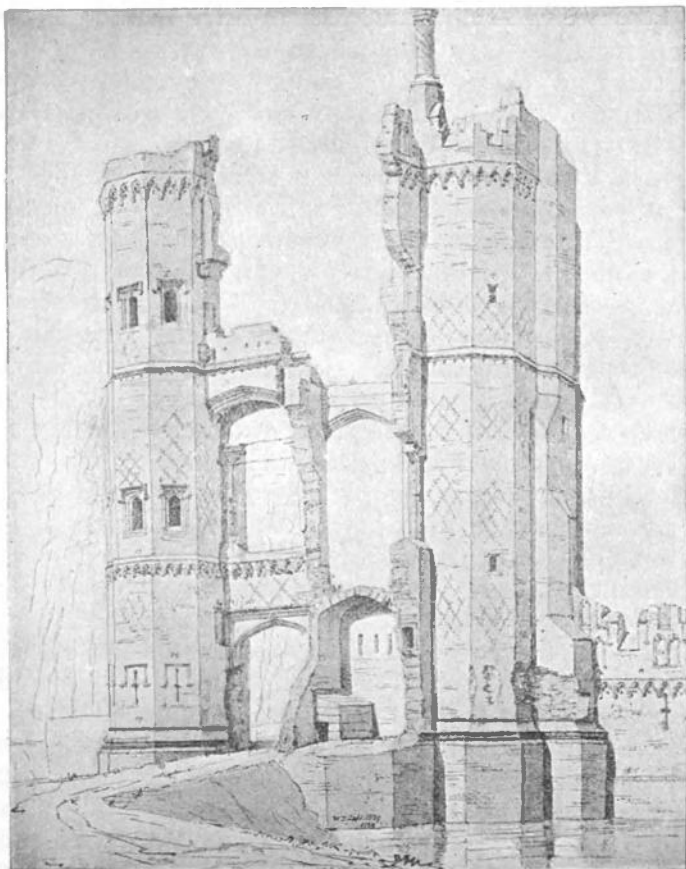
These six castles in England, therefore, were erected by men who had been for years familiar in France with castles built in brick with a diaper pattern, and with several of the other characteristics which appear for the first time in the castles they erected on their return home.

With regard to the diaper pattern, which appears to have been in use in France from the early middle ages, Viollet-le-Duc tells us² that it had its rise in the Bourbonnais district of France, where there was no stone, and where brickwork was carried to a great perfection. At the time of the wars in France many examples of it were to be seen in the districts in the English occupation.

¹ *Antiquities of England.*

² *Dictionnaire raisonne de l'architecture française*, Paris, n.d.

French instances of remarkable diaper-work may be seen to-day in La Palisse, Herbault, Courcelles-du-Roi, Auffay, Renaud, Steene, Rambures,¹ Lassay, Gien, and possibly



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FIG. I. NETHER HALL, ESSEX. THE RUINED GATEHOUSE.

From a drawing by W. Twopeny, figured in Garner and Stratton's *Domestic Architecture of the Tudor Period*.

¹ Rambures is the castle to which the Black Prince took John V as a prisoner in 1360. It is all of brick with a pattern in black

headers. In the centre is a stepped gable, and near it a polygonal tower, with a corbelled cornice.

Verneuil.¹ These examples, it is true, are not all older than the fifteenth century, but some are, and all serve to show how popular this kind of ornamental brickwork was in France at the time when it appeared first in England.

And the influence of these first English castles on the popularity of brick in this country can be to some extent traced. One John Gigur, Gygur, or Gygour was instituted in 1443-1444 warden of the college founded at Tattershall by Ralph Cromwell.² He became warden of Merton College, Oxford, from 1471 to 1482,³ but his origin is unknown: his name is scarcely an English one. Gigur was employed by bishop Wainfleet, one of Ralph Cromwell's executors, to procure a site and contract with workmen for the building of the school at Wainfleet,⁴ which is entirely in brick, and has most of the characteristics which may be designated as the "new style." The presence of Wainfleet's arms on the church porch at Tattershall leads us also to suppose that in his capacity of executor he had to carry out several of Ralph Cromwell's foundations which were unfinished at his death. Other brick buildings also emanated from Tattershall, for bishop Wainfleet in 1441 began the brick cloisters of Eton College (plate VII), the oldest portions of which were completed in 1448. During this time the Eton chapel was being built side by side with the cloisters in stone. These cloisters have a diamond pattern in black headers, and are in regular coursings of the old English bond. And bishop Wainfleet helped further to popularise the use of brick. During the time he held the bishopric of Winchester, that is, between 1447 and 1486, he rebuilt most of the episcopal manor house at Esher in Surrey. Of this only the gatehouse is now standing (plate VIII, no. 1), and this was much altered in the eighteenth century by the architect Kent; but the remaining portions retain all the characteristics of the style, the black header patterns, the corbelled

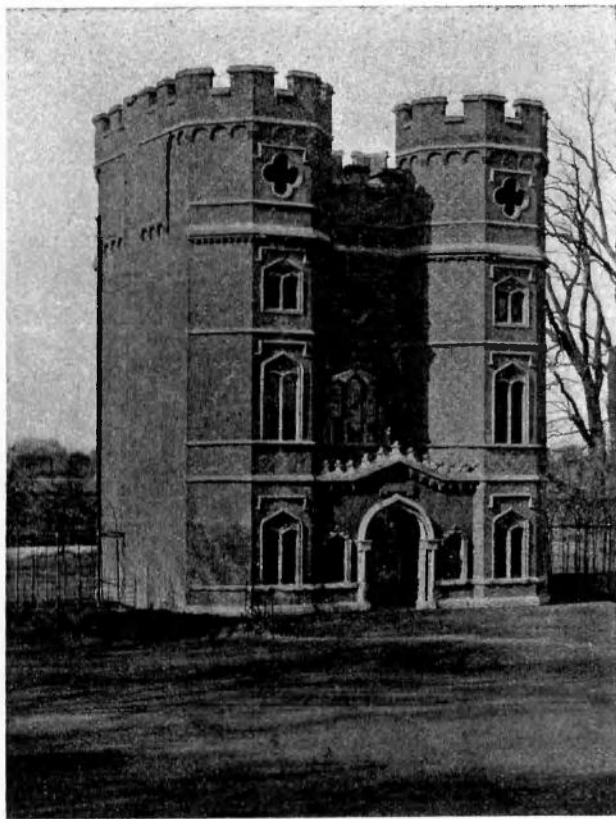
¹ cf. M. M. Fouquier, *Les grands châteaux de France*, Paris, 1907; and G. Eyries, *Les châteaux historiques de la France*, 1877-1878.

² Mr. Hamilton Thompson has kindly

sent me the date from bishop Alnwick's register at Lincoln.

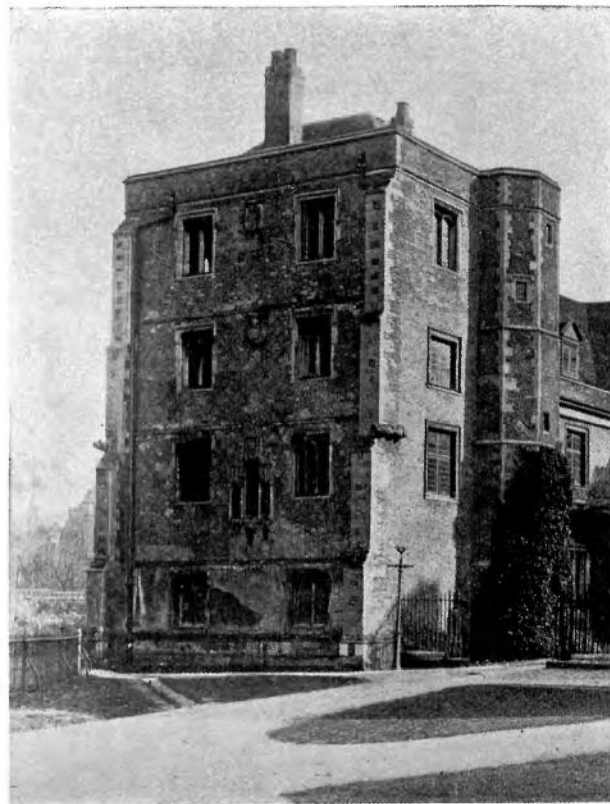
³ Brodrick, *Memorials of Merton Coll.* Oxford Hist. Soc.

⁴ Chandler, *Life of William Wainfleet* 1811.

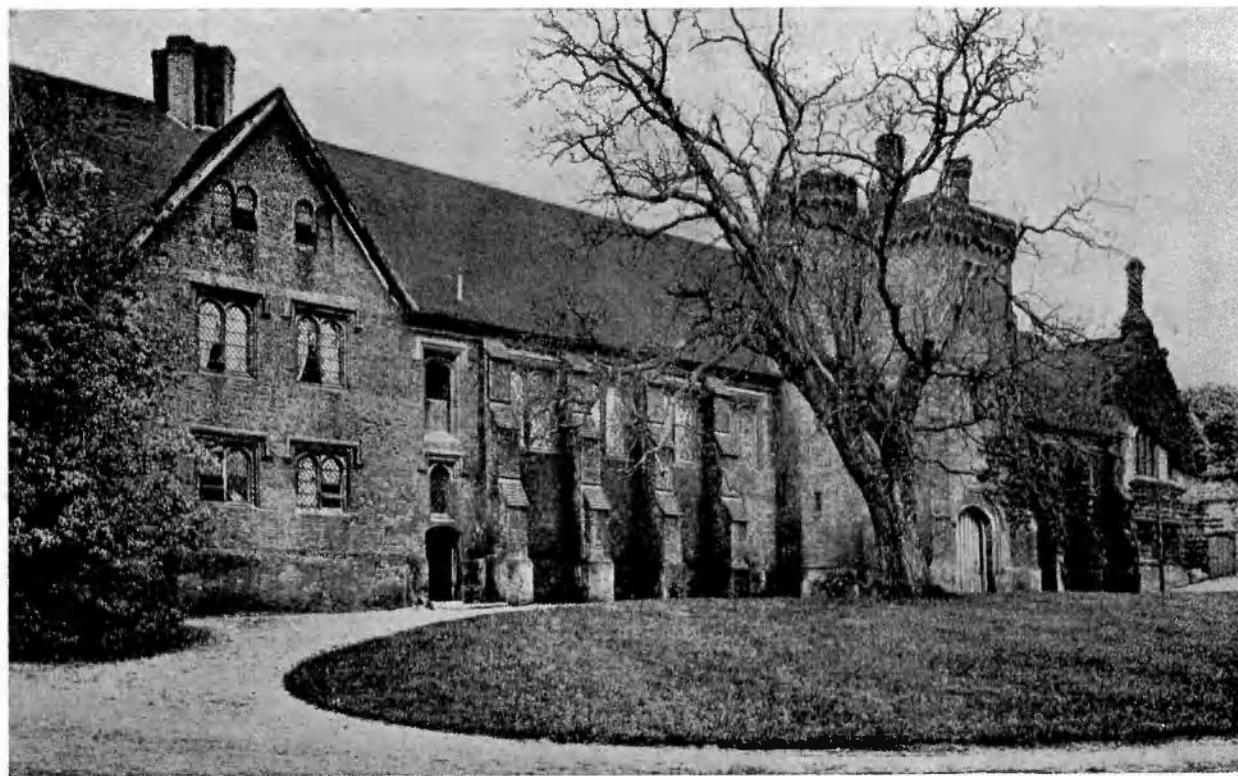


NO. I. ESHER PLACE GATEHOUSE.

[*W. J. Fricker, phot.*]



NO. 2. ALCOCK'S TOWER, ELY PALACE.



[By permission of Messrs. B. T. Batsford.]

THE BISHOP'S PALACE, HATFIELD.

From Garner and Stratton, *Domestic Architecture of the Tudor Period in England*.

cornice, moulded brick in the vaulting and in the sunk handrail of the staircase ; and there were formerly stepped gables on the subsidiary buildings. All these are found also at Tattershall castle and in other of these buildings.

Again, to trace the pedigree of these buildings further, John Alcock built a good deal in brick after his translation to the bishopric of Ely in 1486. He was born at Hull, a city which was then chiefly built of brick. He also lived some time at Beverley, where the Bar and other gates were existing as nearly new structures. In later life he added a chantry to Holy Trinity church at Hull. When at Ely he held the office of controller of the works to king Henry VII. Remains of Alcock's buildings, which may generally be identified by his device of three cocks upon them, exist in the tower known by his name at the palace at Ely (plate VIII, no. 2), in the gatehouse and kitchen at Downham, a few miles from Ely, and in his foundation of Jesus College, Cambridge. Alcock's brickwork does not follow quite on the lines of Tattershall and some other of these buildings. The bricks are as a rule longer and more irregular in shape, and the joints in consequence wider, and the architecture, while preserving most of the features of the new style with regard to the ornamentation, is more conservative in its general character.

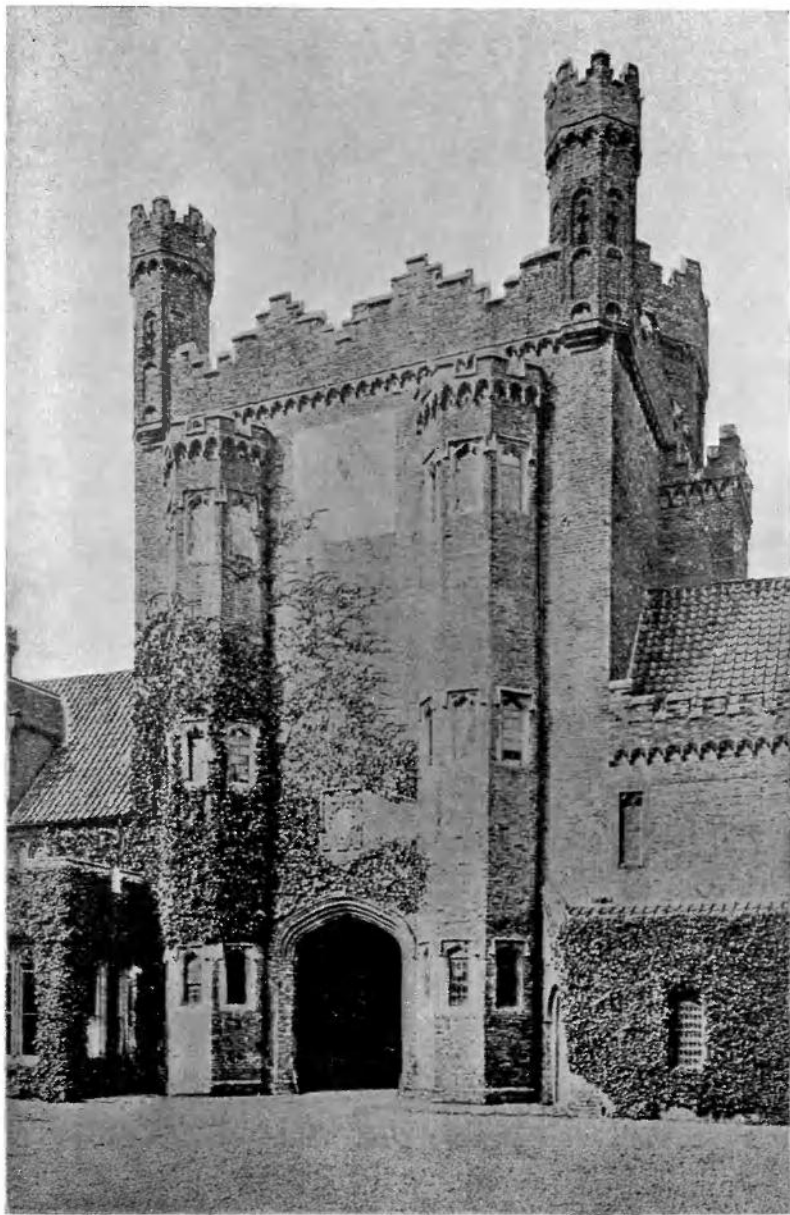
The connexion of the various buildings of this century might be carried further, and goes to show that the popularity of brick rapidly became widespread from definable centres, and not that a few buildings were well enough built to survive to the present day out of a multitude which at one time might be seen around them.

The examples chosen for the illustration of this period are confined to houses which were not rebuilt, and of which a considerable portion remains in its original form. The consequence is that most of them are chiefly or entirely in ruins. But even with this large elimination, portions of at least nineteen remain in different parts of the country, sufficiently preserved to show some characteristic features in the treatment of material or in ornament, though admitting of little comparison in plan.

The end of the fifteenth century forms a natural limit to this subject, for the influence of the Italian renaissance begins historically with the visit of Torrigiano to England

and his work on the tomb of Henry VII at Westminster about 1516. And the Italian renaissance, which, so far as its influence is shown upon houses, is seen in the use of terra-cotta ornament on Layer Marney Towers, in Essex, spread as quickly as the earlier French influence had done. Consequently the last eighty years of the fifteenth century with regard to the building of country houses in brick forms a period to itself. No endeavour is made here to treat these houses in detail architecturally. The original plans are most of them either not recovered or not recoverable. Again the difficulties are great on account of repairs and the refacing of walls. An attempt has been made only to show that historical events account for their rise and rapid spread. The remainder must be left to those who have a greater knowledge of architecture and can study the existing examples in detail.

And this much may be added. The great popularity of brick, in response to the demand for inexpensive dwellings, soon spread from the great houses to the small. And when we look at the face of the country now, we see that in its time the use of a new material solved the problem of housing the population, for the great majority of our large towns to-day are built of brick. But the problem is again with us, for it has now become very difficult for the labouring class to pay the rents which the expense of building cottages requires. The solution may be found again in the use of some new material, hitherto neglected, which may be near at hand, and adaptable to the purpose required. In this way archaeologists can re-interpret the past, and bear their part in the solution of the vexed problems of the present day.



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OXBURGH HALL, NORFOLK, SOUTH SIDE, TOWARDS COURTYARD.

From Garner and Stratton, *Domestic Architecture of the Tudor Period in England*.