

Notes on some Old Houses of Derby.

BY GEORGE BAILEY.

IN these days of rapid change, when everything seems to be giving place to something else, and when what has been a well-known thing to generations past is almost suddenly removed from the view, to be altogether lost to that which will succeed, some Notes on Old Houses may have interest to not a few.

The very term "old houses" has to most people a meaning far beyond the name; for are they not old homes? and is not many a tale of sorrow, joy, love—and although the reflection is not a pleasant one, yet it must be said, and of crime—attached to them? Those old walls could reveal to us many a grim skeleton; and while we admit the necessity that these fabrics must give place to others, better adapted perhaps to the requirements of the times in which we live, yet, just as we regret the wholesale destruction of old churches, castles, and halls, because of the interest which belongs to them as containing in themselves histories of the manners and customs, the political and religious life of our ancestors, lost to us in so many instances by wanton destruction—so we feel that these old homes have much in common with those more pretentious buildings, the loss of which to the architect, the antiquary, the artist, and the man of letters, is so great and irreparable.

Of picturesque old houses in Derby, a very great number have already been removed, and, it may be said, the days of those remaining are numbered. A few more years will see the last of them; and it would be no difficult task to prove, that, whatever



OLD WHITE HORSE. DERBY.

else may be said in favour of those we have erected in their stead, we have not erred on the side of too much good taste. It is not, however, intended in these remarks to enter into the question of what is or is not the best style to be adopted in building, but simply to give, in plates which accompany this brief letter-press, some sketches of old houses in Derby and the neighbourhood that appear to be worthy of being preserved in this way. They cannot fail to be of interest in future years, when the quaint originals no longer exist.

There was, till lately, in Friar Gate, where the G. N. Railway now crosses, an old inn named the *Old White Horse*—(Plate VI.) It was a queer-looking old place for an inn; but was much frequented, at no very remote period, by lovers of good ale. We have often been much amused on a Sunday, to see a number of these pacing to and fro in the front, waiting till the hour arrived for opening the house. Each one tried to look quite unconscious that any such place existed; and yet, when the door opened, they took the earliest opportunity of gliding through it, to procure their favourite beverage. On Sunday evenings, the number of persons of both sexes who made it necessary to call and “wet their whistles” was astonishing, and gave one the impression that a large number who were not total abstainers frequented the locality. Hutton, in his *History of Derby*, relates a curious story of a former hostess of the Old White Horse, whose very free manner of life gave to it a not by any means enviable notoriety; but the story is too long to transcribe, so the curious reader is referred to his pages. The *White Horse Inn* is incidentally mentioned in the Churchwardens’ Accounts of All Saints’, under the year 1632. Much of the old building, recently removed, was doubtless of that date, though the windows, &c., had been subsequently renewed; and the same remark will apply to the old thatched house adjoining the inn, which is shown on the sketch.

Besides this old inn, Friar Gate contains several other old houses of more or less interest. There is part of one near the Savings Bank, the barge boards and hip-knobs of which were of good design; some of the latter remain, but the original barge boards have long since passed away. There is in Parker’s

Glossary a wood-cut of one of the hip-knobs, which seems to be of the time of James I.

The almshouses for clergymen's widows, called Large's Hospital, were instituted in 1716. They are also an interesting example of a style of building now fast passing away. There is a substantial, well-to-do air about them, and, like an oft-seen and familiar old friend, we should grieve their loss. Time, however, spares not old friends; neither does the march of progress, or expediency, spare old houses, even though time deal gently by them.

At the corner of Amen Alley (Plate VII.), there is a very picturesque old house, and another in S. Peter's Street (Plate VII.). This latter has been a very good example of a half-timber house but it has been so altered from time to time that little of the original character remains. Still, from some portions of the lower part, a very good idea of what it has formerly been may be obtained. There has evidently been a good deal of carved wood-work about it; some carved posts of a good character still remain on the side nearest the churchyard. The carved support at the corner is still in good preservation, and is now a very uncommon example; it is well designed.

Mr. J. Charles Cox tells us that he has reason to believe that this dwelling was the chantry-house of the priest who sang at the altar of Our Lady in the adjacent church of S. Peter; the chantry-house of the priest of S. Nicholas, in the same church, was situated in Bag Lane.

The house in Amen Alley has a similar corner-post, but it is quite plain. The little that remains of the original work of these two houses may safely be assigned to the first half of the 15th century. On the plaster of the Amen Alley house are slight remains of diapering. At Little Chester there is a cottage also having diapered plaster work upon it. The date is probably the same.

The best half-timber house is one behind Mr. Gadsby's residence in Tenant Street. It is a very excellent specimen of that kind of building, and was probably built in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. This house is but little known to



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

OLD HOUSES IN S. PETER'S CHURCHYARD & ALEN ALLEY, DERBY.

Derby people, and when first seen has a somewhat startling effect ; for there is nothing in the house at the front which gives a clue to the existence of the highly picturesque building behind. These buildings, of which sketches are given, are, so far as the writer knows, the best examples of this style in the town ; but there is at Hilton, a village about seven miles away, a very pretty mansion-house—indeed, the best in the neighbourhood ; and although not strictly in Derby, yet it is near enough to have a place with those that are, possessing as it does features which they have not ; the arrangement of the wood-work in patterns being unique in this neighbourhood.

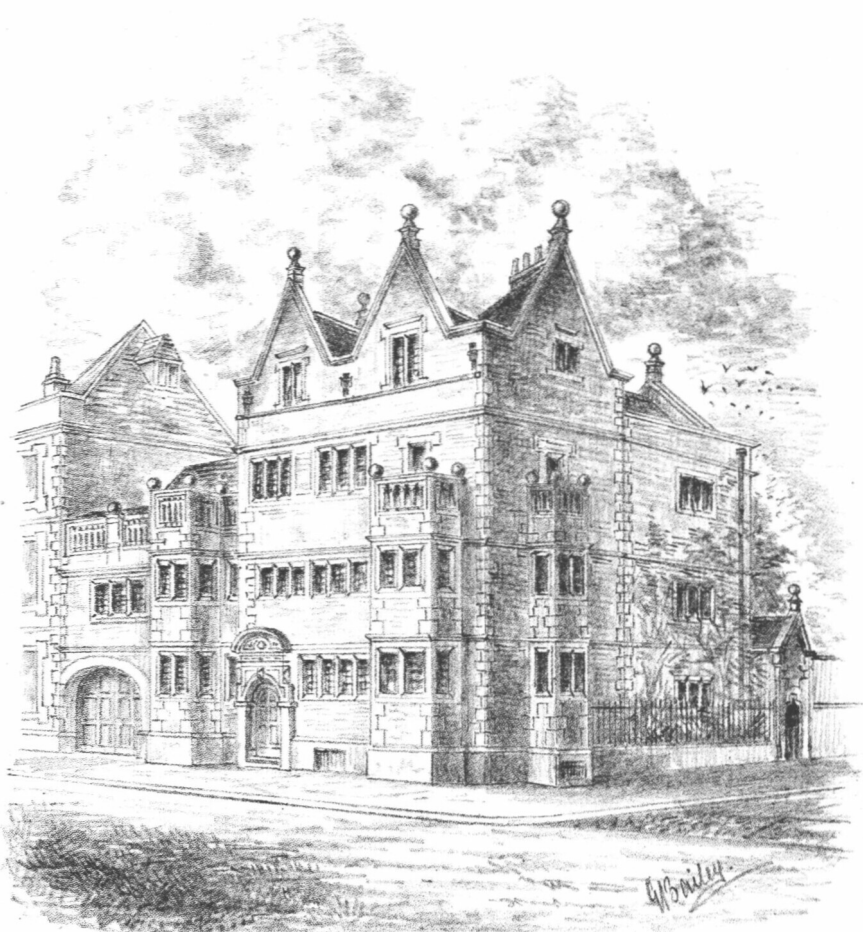
Of 17th century brick houses, there are several portions in Tenant Street, Full Street, Bag Lane, Walker Lane, and S. Peter's Churchyard. The last mentioned is entire and very excellent of its kind ; and, we venture to say, conveys some very excellent suggestions to our modern cottage builders. The mouldings are all of brick, and the effect is much superior to the bald and flimsy structures now so common. It will compare favourably with those singular modern monstrosities called by the name of good Queen Anne. There are good reasons for believing that this house was built in the reign of Charles II. We give a sketch of this capital old house, which, we regret to hear, will soon be demolished, and also of that in Walker Lane.

We conclude these notices with the fine old mansion of the Gisbornes, in the Wardwick. This is the only house of the kind left in Derby, and although it has been altered from its original design, the alteration has been so well done as to have added to its picturesqueness (Plate VIII.). There is over the entrance the date 1611, carved in stone.

These remarks have been penned not only to preserve the features of some picturesque "old houses of Derby," but also in the hope that into the business of house-building some more pleasant and agreeable designs may be introduced into those which are built to the street. These might be varied by oriel windows of slight projection in the upper stories, so as to break the monotony of the fronts. We would call attention to a very

pretty window of this character in Victoria Street ; such windows add much to the appearance of a house. Then we have so many pretty patterns in bricks, too, which could be readily adapted, as well as the various ornaments for architectural purposes made in terra-cotta. Many of these inexpensive things, judiciously used, would add much to the beauty of our houses, whether of a large or small size ; and if a few good examples were erected, there is no doubt they would be speedily imitated, to the manifest improvement of our street architecture. The only wonder is, that with so many advantages which our ancestors did not possess, we have done so little in giving to the exteriors of our dwellings an artistic and pleasant appearance ; whilst they, with the moderate means at their command, did so much in this way.

Plates of Large's Almshouses, brick houses in St. Peter's Churchyard and Walker Lane, Mr. Gadsby's, Tenant Street, and the old Mansion House at Hilton, will appear in the next part of this Journal, together with any further information that may be gathered relating to this subject.



Old house in the Wardwick, Derby.