

LONGFORD CASTLE, AND LONGLEAT.¹

By J. A. GOTCH.

Longford Castle is interesting in many ways. Its curious plan,—that of a triangle with a tower at each angle,—the various circumstances connected with its origin, and its fine collection of pictures, make it interesting to those wholly unacquainted with architecture: while to those who practice that art, and to all who are given to the study of archæology, the fact that we have the original drawings of the Castle preserved in the Soane Museum is of the highest interest.

Let us first recount the building of the place according to popular tradition. The Manor of Longford belonged in the middle of the sixteenth century,—that is, in the time of Philip and Mary,—to a family named Cervington, the last of whom was a man of extravagant and dissipated habits, so much so, that in course of time he was obliged to mortgage his estate to one John Webb, of Salisbury. John Webb being unable to get the interest of his money, foreclosed in the year 1573, and the last of the Cervingtons found himself ejected from the home of his ancestors, and wandered about the estate in a condition of great misery. John Webb who had turned him out, shortly afterwards sold the estate to Sir Thomas Gorges, a son of Sir Edward Gorges of Wraxall, co. Somerset, and it is said that the unfortunate Cervington, who still lurked about the place, used to make his way into the house to the annoyance and terror of the servants. On one occasion the wild and miserable man was taken before Sir Thomas himself, and on being questioned as to who he was, told his name, and added that a Cervington was at least as good as a Gorges; Sir Thomas, moved

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by his sad plight, gave orders that thenceforth he was to be treated with attention and respect, but the unfortunate man shortly afterwards died miserably under an elm tree in the Coney-garth, a victim to his own improvidence.

The house thus invaded by the wreck of its former master could not have been that which we now see, for Cervington was ejected in 1573 and the foundations of the present building were not begun till thirteen years later, in 1586, and it is incredible that the poor man's misery could have been prolonged through all those years. Sir Thomas Gorges had married Helena, the widow of William Parr, Marquis of Northampton and brother of Katherine Parr, who was so fortunate as to survive Henry VIII. Lady Gorges was a Swede by birth, being the daughter of George Wolfgangus Snachenburg, and she had come over to England in the train of Princess Cecilia, daughter of Eric, King of Sweden, all of which history may be deciphered by the curious on her tomb in Salisbury Cathedral. When her second husband, Sir Thomas, thought of building himself a new house, she persuaded him, it is said, to build it after the model of a castle near her own country, the Danish Castle of Uranienburg in the Sound, which had been designed by Tycho Brahe. Sir Thomas complied with her wishes, but the site chosen for the building swallowed up the greater part of his fortune in foundations, and the work threatened to be abandoned, when by a fortunate chance one of the galleons in the Spanish Armada was wrecked near Hurst Castle, of which Sir Thomas was Governor. His lady successfully begged the hull of the queen, and this was found to contain enough treasure to complete the whole structure in the year 1591, the total cost being about £18,000.

Such is the popular version of the building of Longford. How far it is authenticated, and how far it is mere tradition, I am unable to say. Let us now turn to the information we have in black and white, namely the drawings preserved in the Soane Museum.

The drawings are by an architect named John Thorpe, who was concerned in a very great number of houses at this period, among them being "Burleigh House by

Stamford Town," Kirby, Holdenby, all in Northamptonshire; Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland; Audley-End in Essex; Ampthill in Bedfordshire; Wollaton in Nottinghamshire; Holland House; Slaugham Place and Buckhurst House in Sussex; Loseley House in Surrey; Somerhill in Kent; besides many others. All his drawings, bound in a book and numbering over 210, are preserved at the Soane Museum in London. The drawings relating to Longford are on folios 155, 156, 158, and consist of a ground plan, front elevation, and an elevation of the garden side. The ground plan shews a triangular building with a triangular court in the centre, a round tower at each external angle, and a circular staircase at each angle of the Courtyard. These features may be found to-day, but the Courtyard has been roofed over and made into a fine saloon. The interior generally has been modernized, and there has been a good deal added to the house, so that it is a very different place from what it was when first built. It is certain, however, that Thorpe's ground plan was not carried out as drawn, and we may fairly regard it as a preliminary sketch. It is otherwise with the elevation. This does not agree with his plan, but it agrees in all but a very few particulars with a view of Longford drawn by Robert Thacker, shewing the Castle "Repaired and Beautified by Henry Hare, Baron of Coleraine, in the year 1650." It agrees so minutely that there is no doubt that this elevation of Thorpe's represents the house as it was originally to have been built, although a few modifications were introduced as the work went on.

The front that is to be seen at the present day has evidently been rebuilt, for it differs in essential particulars of arrangement from Thorpe's elevation and Thacker's view; but apparently nearly all the old features have been used again, including the balustrades, arches, pilasters, cornices and strings. This opinion, arrived at by comparing these old views with the present structure, is borne out by information derived from the Clerk of the Works, who says that the stone and mortar of the arcaded part differ from that of the tower, and that the floor of the arcaded part does not rest on the Tower wall but it is supported by posts and iron bands.

The conclusions, therefore, that we may come to

are these :—The tower to the right of the entrance is the original work, so is also the the other tower on the garden side. The entrance front itself has been rebuilt, with the original features arranged in a somewhat different manner. The garden side between the two towers has been almost entirely rebuilt. The interior has been re-arranged and modernized, while a large part on the north eastern side is altogether new.

Assuming, as we may fairly do, that John Thorpe was the architect of Longford, where did he get his idea of the curious triangular plan? Did he copy the Castle of Uranienburg as stated, or did he design it himself? His drawing certainly looks like a preliminary sketch plan; it is partly in ink and partly with pencil notes. On the front side it says "Court heare," on the garden side it says "Garden heare," and on the third side "Orchard heare," all of which imply that the site was already fixed. The fact that it is a quaint and fanciful plan is in favour of its being Thorpe's own design, for his MS. book abounds in fanciful plans, and on fol. 161, that is in close proximity to this plan of Longford, occurs another plan on the triangular system, but more matured, and a further development of the Longford idea—there is however no name to it, and no evidence of its ever having been carried out. If on the one hand an examination of Thorpe's designs leads us to the conclusion that he might very well be the author of Longford, on the other there must be some foundation for the statement that the design was brought from Denmark; and if evidence could be given of this it would throw a very interesting light on the source of some of Thorpe's ideas. But whatever conclusion we adopt, we must not imagine that this is a solitary specimen of fanciful design imported from abroad. The air of the latter part of the sixteenth century was full of quaint conceits, some of which got embodied in stone, and among them was Longford. Its date is 1591; in 1593-5 Sir Thomas Tresham was building at Rushton in Northamptonshire his Triangular Lodge,—a very much smaller building, but one containing many more quaint conceits. It is an embodiment in stone of the idea of the Trinity,—three in one. Curiously enough, on Thorpe's plan of Longford, within the trian-

gular court-yard, is a device emblematic of the Trinity. But the triangular Lodge was not the only emblematic building erected by Sir Thomas Tresham. About five years later, that is in 1600, he was building Lyveden New Building, which is a cross on plan, and in all its parts symbolizes the Passion. Plans of Lyveden are also among Thorpe's drawings, so that a very close relationship is established between all these quaint and curious buildings.

Longford Castle, therefore, may be taken as an example of one type of planning prevalent in Elizabeth's reign, when the object of those concerned seemed to be not so much to promote the comfort or convenience of the house, as to embody some sentiment, or to work out some quaint idea to which all notions of convenience had to bend. The appearance of the plan on paper was all that was cared for. At Longleat we shall find another type of building, much less quaint but more reasonable, in which symmetrical magnificence was aimed at, but almost equally at the cost of convenience. It must be noticed that in the middle gable over the front entrance is carved a ship in full sail. Has this any reference to the legend of the Spanish galleon? And if so was it placed there in commemoration of that circumstance, or was the circumstance invented in consequence of the ship being there? On Thorpe's elevation the arched recess is shewn, but not the ship; it appears, however, on Thacker's view in 1650. With regard to the rest of the detail it is of the period, but a close examination will shew that the sections of the strings and cornices are by no means orthodox, though they are very similar to those on other buildings attributable to Thorpe.

Longford Castle therefore, in spite of the alterations it has undergone, throws no little light upon a phase of architecture of great interest, and one which was the result of the most active period of house-building which the country had ever seen previous to the Victorian era.

LONGLEAT.

Longleat is an excellent text upon which to found a discourse on the domestic Architecture of the Renaissance,

but before doing this let us see what we know with regard to its history. Canon Jackson has already busied himself with this subject, and is in a far better position to speak on it than anyone else, and it is therefore with great diffidence that I approach it.

The house was begun by Sir John Thynne—who was the founder of the family and the purchaser of the estate—in 1567, as shewn by a book of building accounts which begins on the 21st January, 1567, and continues till the 29th March, 1578, during which time £8016 13s. 8½d. was spent. Loseley House, near Guildford, was building about the same time, viz. from 1561 to Michaelmas 1569, during which time only a little over £1600 was spent, but Loseley House is not so large as Longleat. The £8000 sufficed to cover the cost of the outside of the house, except the west front, and part of the inside court, but the exact extent it is difficult now to determine. Sir John Thynne died in 1580, leaving his son, the second Sir John, to carry on the work. Under his directions the balustrade that crowns the walls, many of the chimneys, and some of the towers were built; and the screen in the Hall and much of the panelling were also finished. The work was taken up by Sir John's successors, one of whom employed Sir Christopher Wren, and were continued for a great number of years. Finally Jeffrey Wyatt came upon the scene early in the present century and blotted out all history from the inside, and from the outside, too, except from the south and east fronts. It is therefore from them that we must learn all that Longleat has to teach us. But before proceeding to this lesson let us see what we know about the actual designing of the building.

Longleat has been attributed to John of Padua; to John Thorpe, who is erroneously supposed by some to be the same man under an English name; and to Robert Smithson, who is said by some to have designed Wollaton Hall, near Nottingham. Here are several suppositions which open up rather a wide field of controversy. Without lingering in that field for any length of time, it may perhaps be as well to give one or two facts which will dispose of some of the points in doubt. First of all John Thorpe cannot be John of Padua, since John of

Padua is recorded to have received his first grant "*Pro servitio in architecturâ et musicâ* in 1544." One of Thorpe's plans is dated 1620,—*i.e.*, 76 years later, and it is hard to believe that an architect can have been in active practice for 76 years. Secondly, I am not aware that any evidence exists that John of Padua had anything to do with Longleat. Thirdly, it is certain that no evidence exists that John Thorpe was ever concerned there. Canon Jackson is my authority for this statement, which I can supplement by saying that there is no drawing in Thorpe's collection which can be meant for Longleat. We are therefore left to deal with Robert Smithson's connection with the house and with Wollaton. It is stated that the previously mentioned building accounts shew that on the 11th of March 1568-9, Robert Smythson succeeded John More as head free-mason. I have not been able to examine these accounts in detail, but from a short inspection made with Canon Jackson some time ago, it appeared that they mention a *Richard* Smythson as free-mason at 16d. a day, but do not mention Robert Smythson at all. It would seem however that a Robert Smithson was sent about 1567 to succeed More the mason, but how to reconcile the difference in the names I do not know. If Richard really were the name of the Smythson employed here he could not be the same man who is connected with Wollaton, for *his* name was Robert, as his epitaph in Wollaton Church states. The epitaph is as follows:—

"Here lyeth ye body of Mr.
Robert Smythson Gent.
Architector and Survey-
or unto the most worthy
House of Wollaton with
Diverse others of great
account, he lived in ye fayth
of Christ 79 years, and then
departed this life ye xvth of
October Ano. Dmi. 1614."

Into the rival claims of Robert Smithson and John Thorpe to have designed Wollaton I will not enter: but this much may be said:—that a plan and elevation of Wollaton are found in Thorpe's collection, just as a plan and elevation of Longford are found, and I myself

regard Thorpe as responsible for "the most worthy House of Wollaton." It is interesting to note that Wollaton was begun in 1580, the year of Sir John Thynne's death, so that it would have been quite possible for the same man to have been engaged on both buildings consecutively. But the evidence relied on by some writers—an exact similarity of detail between the two places, pointing indeed to a use of the same templates or moulds—cannot be established. I have compared the sections of the mouldings side by side and find that though in general disposition they resemble each other, yet in particular features they are quite different; those at Wollaton could not even have been worked from an ill-proportioned sketch of those at Longleat. But, in spite of particular differences, there is a certain general similarity in idea between the two places, which would be accounted for by supposing the same foreman to have been engaged at both.

With regard therefore to the immediate source of inspiration at Longleat we can form no certain opinion, but the ultimate source was, of course, Italy. Italian ideas permeated every branch of art and literature at this period, but Longleat is rather a curious example of their influence, inasmuch as no other building of so early a date is so thoroughly classic. Kirby, for instance, which was begun three years later, in 1570, is very much more English in feeling; less formal, and consequently more interesting. But Longleat in its very formality, in its exact balance, in the rigidity of its horizontal lines, in its somewhat tame skyline, from which none of those beautiful gables spring which are characteristic of Anglicized classic—in all these points Longleat very aptly illustrates the effect upon English architecture of travelling in Italy. The same influence is observable in the projecting windows, which are not bay-windows in the strict sense of the term, not at all like the large semi-circular bays at Kirby, or Burton Agnes, or (to name earlier examples) those at the dais end of many halls in Oxford and Cambridge. Then, again, may be observed the circular recesses filled with busts; the busts all represent some classic personages—gods and goddesses, the Nine Worthies (as at Montacute) or Virgil, Aristotle, and Plato as at Wollaton. Here none are named, but

they are of the same family with those that are, and very sorely they must have puzzled the British workman who put them in their places.

The present plan of Longleat can tell us only one fact of historical interest, and that is that the original arrangement of the rooms became unsuitable to modern ideas, and that consequently it has been swept away wholesale. It is often said that the era of housebuilding that began in Elizabeth's reign introduced all the apartments required for modern use. To a large extent this is so. We might even go farther and add that it introduced a great many for which no modern use can be found. But we must not forget that though there was a great multiplication of apartments they were very unscientifically arranged. Nothing is more obvious in visiting Elizabethan houses which are still inhabited, than the straits to which the occupiers have been put to obtain a reasonably comfortable home without destroying the venerable appearance of the house. At Burleigh a corridor has been contrived round the courtyard; at Apethorpe one has to make the circuit of the building before breakfast; at Loseley the family sleep at one end and the guests at the other, with the great hall between them; at Wollaton the window-sills are so high that to sit down is almost like being in a well. There indeed is no concealing the fact that John Thorpe and the other designers of that time went to work on wrong lines. They studied those who were to look at their houses rather than those who were to live in them, they made everything bend to their desire for symmetry. They produced houses into which the inhabitants had to fit themselves. They did not first ascertain the requirements of the inhabitants and then build the house to suit their comfort and convenience. Their way was the easiest; they said "Here is my architecture, you must suit yourself to it." Our way is the best; we say "Such are your habits, our architecture shall be founded on them." In the result what we lose in stateliness we gain in comfort, and those who do not have to live in such houses can freely afford to admire them, and to be thankful to those who, in spite of inconvenience, jealously preserve these magnificent memorials of the past.