Art. XXXIV.—Note on the Inscribed Door Head at Crakeplace Hall, in the County of Cumberland. By J. Holme Nicholson, M.A.

Read at Lake Side, June 13, 1894.

Amongst the many valuable contributions to the Transactions of this Society made by the late Dr. M. W. Taylor, F.S.A., is an interesting paper on the "Legends and Inscriptions over Doorways of Old Houses in Cumberland and Westmorland."* The purport of these inscriptions is chiefly to commemorate the name of the builder, but very frequently some pious ejaculation or sententious maxim is added, whilst one or two communicate some fact of personal history. The rather quaint legend over the doorway of Crakeplace Hall, in the parish of Dean, belongs to the latter class. It runs thus:

The first thought which strikes one on reading the inscription is—"Who was this Baron Altham, in whose

service the builder of the Hall was, and in which he took so much pride as to regard the fact worthy of being recorded in this permanent form?"

The title sounds strangely unfamiliar, and a search through the British Peerage, past and present, yielded me no information. In the end I discovered that it was an Irish title, and had been conferred on the 14th February, 1680-1, on Altham Annesley, the second son of Arthur Annesley, the first Earl of Anglesey of the second creation. But this discovery raised another problem. The date over the doorway is 1612, and if this is the date of the building, of which I think there is no doubt, how could the builder describe himself as being at that time "servant to Baron Altham," no such title being in existence until sixty-nine years later?

A little further investigation, I think, has solved the mystery. The father of the first Baron Altham married Elizabeth, one of the two daughters and coheirs of Sir James Altham, of Oxey, in the County of Hertford, Knight, who was one of the Barons of the Exchequer in the reign of James I. This, no doubt, was the master in whose service Christopher Crakeplace was. He was no peer, of course, but, in ordinary parlance, the *puisne* judges of the Exchequer were, until the passing of the New Judicature Act, styled Barons.