



Levens Hall, Westmoreland,—Entrance and North front. From a drawing by the Rev. G. F. Weston, M.A.

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LEVENS HALL, WESTMORELAND.¹

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THE origin of the word "Levens" I have been unable with certainty to determine. In the Domesday Survey, it is spelled "Lefuenes." Now *lefe* and *leve* being the Anglo-Saxon for *leaf*, making in the plural *leven*, it has been suggested that the word having a final *s* added as a reduplication of the plural, simply means *leaves*; and that to a district abounding in trees, there was an obvious appropriateness in the name. But, apart from the want of distinctiveness in such an appellation, it by no means follows that trees, though they abound in the neighbourhood of the house now, were equally abundant centuries ago; or, at any rate, that the extensive tract of country comprising the original manor was so remarkable for its growth of timber, or its woods, as to obtain from that circumstance its peculiar name. On the contrary, a great portion of the manor must have been fenland, and, therefore, destitute of timber.

And it seems to me highly probable, that it was this tract of flat fenny land, on the edge of which the Hall stands, that gave rise to the name; and that in one of three ways:—

Leven, a word still retained in Scotland, denotes an open space lying between woods; and having the same origin as the word *level*, may be applied to such tracts either from the wood once upon them having been *levelled*, as *field* denotes an open space of pasture or cultivable land on which the wood has been *felled*. Or else the word may be applied

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to such tracts on account of their general flat, level character, and they would be called *The Levens*, or *The Levels*, in the same way that such tracts in other parts of England—for instance, in the flat fenny districts of Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, and Essex, are frequently called *The Flats*. Or the word Levins (and this is an ancient way of spelling the name of the house), derived from the Anglo-Saxon *leg*, *legen* (as *wave* from *wæg*), signifies lightning, flames—"his burning levin-brand in hand he took,"—and may have been applied to this tract from the peat which forms its soil being used for fuel. Or, thirdly (but this I think the least likely of the three), may Levens be a corruption of the Norman-French, which still lingers in so many names, and mean the Manor of *Le-fens*?

One derivation we may, I think, certainly discard, though it has the prestige of antiquity, and served to give to the knightly owners of the manor, the family of "De Levins," in the thirteenth century, as their heraldic badge, a slip of vine, namely, that which would imply the existence of extensive vineyards in this district. It is true that many parts of England were, centuries ago, cultivated as vineyards; and it is true that a former steward of this manor, one James Loftus, writing to his master, Colonel Grahme, in 1701, says, "bemunt" (Beaumont, the gardener) "bids me tell you that grapes ripens very well here;" still I do not think the climate of Westmoreland can have been then so far different from what it is now, as to render any extensive cultivation of the vine possible in this district.

However, leaving the origin of the name of the manor, we may proceed to its history.

Referring to the excellent county history of Nicholson and Burn, we find that Levens, at the time of the Conquest, or soon after, was part of the possessions of Tosti, Earl of Northumberland; and that, at the time of the Domesday Survey it belonged to Roger of Poitou. In the 34th year of Henry II., Ketel, who then owned the manor, sold off one moiety of it, viz., that with which we are at present concerned, and which afterwards became known as Upper or Over Levens, to Henry, son of Norman de Redeman; and in the possession of the Redeman family it continued for rather more than three hundred years. The other half of the manor passed from Ketel, or his immediate successors,

into the hands of a family of note of the name of De Levins, some of whom are expressly styled, of "Levins Hall." This would seem to imply that the original manor-house, or hall, was situate in this half of the estate ; indeed it would be but natural that the owner, on parting with a portion of his property, would retain that containing his own residence. However, from the first division of the manor, the two moieties remained distinct, and became known as Upper, or Over Levens, and Nether, or Under Levens, each having its own hall, or manorial residence.

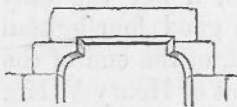
Of the two, I should be inclined to think that the Upper, or Over Levens,—the one with which we have now to do,—became also the upper in point of consequence. In what remains of Nether Levens Hall, the chief, if not the only architectural feature worthy of note is a good four-lighted window (but not an oriel) in the dining-hall, of the end of the reign of Henry VII. or the beginning of that of Henry VIII. ; further, its rooms are smaller, and their decorations inferior in character to those of this Levens, which, if I am right in regarding the main plan of the existing building as dating considerably beyond Henry VII.'s reign, must, from the size of its hall and other rooms, have belonged to a family of great wealth and importance. Such, indeed, we know the family of the Redemans to have been, and this was the residence of the principal family of that name. One Henry de Redeman, probably the purchaser of the estate in the time of Henry II., was Seneschal of Kendal. In the reign of Henry III., Matthew de Redeman was also Seneschal of Kendal ; and in subsequent reigns others of the family were representatives of the county of Westmoreland in Parliament.

It passed out of the possession of this family by purchase into that of the Bellinghams of Burneside, near Kendal, some time towards the end of the fifteenth century ; and, after remaining in their possession about two centuries, it was purchased by Colonel James Grahme, Privy Purse to King James II., younger brother of Sir Richard Grahme of Netherby, in the possession of whose descendants it has continued ever since.

It has thus, during the last seven hundred years, been in the hands of three families—the Redemans, the Bellinghams, and Colonel Grahme and his descendants ; of each set of

possessors traces may be discovered in the old building. The work of the Bellinghams is of course very apparent—so apparent, indeed, as to give one the impression of the entire building being an erection of the Elizabethan period. There are traces, however, of what I feel sure is a much older building, carrying us back to the occupancy of the Redemans.

The traces I allude to are, two pointed doorways at the foot of the tower on the north side of the building, and two other doorways in a vaulted cellar below the drawing-room, of a peculiar construction which originated in the thirteenth century, to which I believe the name of square trefoil-headed has been given. (See woodcut.) It is the existence of this cellar that convinces me that this building was originally one of the Pele Towers of this district—such being one of their invariable features.² See the ground-plans at the



close of this memoir.

These pele towers were the usual fortified manor-houses of the Border Country. They consisted of a hall, some thirty, forty, or fifty feet long, by about half the breadth; the floor raised but little, if at all, above the level of the ground outside; the lofty roof, open to view, of massive oaken timber, more or less ornamental in its construction. The chief entrance to the building from without was in the side of the hall, nearly at one end of it, which was sometimes protected by a tower as seems to have been the case here. Immediately opposite to this door, on the other side of the hall was another door opening into a court-yard in the rear. These two doors were screened off from the hall by a strong oaken partition extending across it, ten or twelve feet high, often beautifully carved, so placed as to form between it and the end wall a sufficiently spacious passage. In this end wall were entrances to the kitchen, the buttery, and other offices. At the other end of the hall was the dais, a raised floor of one step, extending the entire breadth of the chamber, where was placed the long table, at the higher side of which the lord and his family and any distinguished guests took their

² The doorways in this and the adjoining vaulted cellars are marked in the accompanying ground-plan (No. 1) and

indicated by the letters *a* to *e*. The doorway, *f*, has been broken through at some comparatively recent time.

meals ; while guests of inferior rank were seated, with the retainers, at tables ranging either along each side or down the centre of the room. The hall was also used for the transaction of all matters of business between the lord and his vassals. In it he held his royalty court or court baron, receiving their suit and service, and administering justice according to the powers granted to him by the Crown.

Adjoining the dais end of the hall was a very strongly built tower, rising two, three, or four storeys in height. The basement of this tower was always a massively-constructed vaulted cellar, with very thick walls, lighted by small iron-barred windows. The hall communicated with the tower by an arched stone doorway, closed, first by a massive oak door, and then, for further protection, by a second door of crossed iron bars framed together. This doorway also gave access to a stone spiral staircase formed in one angle of the cellar wall, going up the entire height of the tower, by which the chambers in its successive storeys were reached. The first chamber, called the Lord's Solar, was the bed-chamber of the master and mistress of the house, but, being of considerable size—sometimes five-and-thirty feet by twenty—was also used as a withdrawing-room for the family, after the evening meal, when the retainers, who had shared the meal at a lower table in the hall, prepared to pass the night enwrapped in quilts spread upon the rush-strewn floor. Above this chamber was another, which formed one or more sleeping rooms for other members of the family. Above all was the flat-leaded roof, protected by an embattled parapet. This tower formed the stronghold, or keep, of the dwelling. In the event of the outer fortifications being stormed, and even the hall gained by an enemy, the family and many of the retainers would find here a place of safety, where, shut in by the oaken and iron doors at the foot of the stairs, secure against fire and almost every other means of attack, and with access to the well-stored cellar, they might hold out for a considerable time—perhaps till relief arrived from some friendly neighbour. The roof, commanding a distant view of the country, and from which, in the first instance, the approach of danger had probably been detected, afforded them, when thus besieged, a widely-seen position for signals of distress ; and from behind the shelter of its battlements

much loss and annoyance might be inflicted on the baffled foe by a few skilful marksmen.

Many specimens of the pele tower in this its early state are to be found in Westmoreland, and Kentmere Hall, the seat of the Gilpins, at the head of the valley of the Kent, may be mentioned as a good example.

Such a building I believe this Hall of Levens to have been ; and its main features, in spite of all subsequent alterations, are, I think, discoverable.

The present entrance hall was the hall of the early stronghold, as regards at least its four walls. Its floor was, probably, on a level with the ground outside, instead of being elevated as now ; and above, instead of its present highly-wrought plaster ceiling, the massive oaken timber-work of its roof would be open to view. Then in lieu of the present fireplace in the east wall, to warm the hall a huge fire of logs burnt, probably in the centre of the floor, the smoke from which would find its exit through an open lantern in the roof. The entrance would be in the west wall, probably in the part now covered by the tower, which may subsequently, though still in ancient times, have been erected as a protection to it. The existing entrance, and also the spacious oaken staircase, are part of the alterations made by Colonel Grahme at the end of the seventeenth century.

The kitchens and other offices were, I think, at the end where now we have the dining-room ; such being the usual position for them ; and I have been told of traces of buildings having been discovered in the garden at this end of the house, with indications, if I remember rightly, of their having been destroyed by fire ; these may perhaps have been the foundations of those portions of the hall in its most ancient state.

At the other, that is, the east end of the hall, we find the vaulted cellar, which always formed the basement chamber of the tower. It is altogether about 40 feet long by $17\frac{1}{3}$ wide, and $7\frac{1}{2}$ high at the crown of the arch ; but it is divided into two by a cross wall in which is one of the square trefoil-headed doors I have before alluded to. There are thus two cellars, an outer and an inner one : the former, which is the smaller, about $17\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 10 ; the latter $17\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 23. The outer and smaller cellar were entered from without through two doorways, the

outer one in a projection now forming the basement of the bay-window in the drawing-room; the inner in the massive wall of the cellar itself, at the distance of about six feet. This latter is another of the square trefoil-headed doors of which I have spoken. The spiral stone staircase so invariably found in these towers is certainly wanting; but I think the end wall of the tower, in which it would have been found, was taken down in order to elongate the drawing-room, or rather to add the library, during the occupation of the Bellinghams, and that the massive oak staircase, which is certainly of that period, was substituted for it, very nearly in the same position, as a more commodious means of access to the upper rooms. See the plans at the close of this memoir.

Such, then, would seem to be the traces of the building existing in the time of the Redemans, who, as I have said, resided here from about 1200 to 1500; and these traces we may perhaps refer back to the fourteenth century.

We now come to its occupation under its next owners—the Bellingham family.

Some time about the year 1500 it was purchased by one Alan Bellingham, who was the eighth son of Sir Robert Bellingham of Burneshead or Burneside Hall, another interesting tower-house a short distance on the north side of Kendal. This family sprang from Bellingham in Tynedale, Northumberland, where they had considerable possessions at a very early period, and drew their descent from one Alan de Bellingham of Bellingham, in the time of William the Conqueror. They became connected with Westmoreland in the reign of Edward I., when one Richard de Bellingham married Margaret, the only daughter and heiress of Gilbert de Burneshead, and through that marriage became possessed of the manor and settled there. The father of the said Richard, William de Bellingham, judging from a curious old document still in existence,—a Record of the Justices Itinerant of King Alexander III. of the Pleas at Wark, in the thirty-first year of that king's reign,—would seem to have been a man of great power and influence, and, from the perpetual feuds in which he was engaged, sometimes with the smaller landowners, sometimes with the powerful ecclesiastical dignitaries of Hexham and Jedburgh, to have been fond of using his power and influence to the annoyance of his neighbours. Among the many disputes in which he was

involved was one with the neighbouring family of Charlton, respecting the pasture of Hesleyside, which was decided against him, the jury giving their verdict in favour of the Charltons, in the possession of which family it has continued ever since. His claim, too, to the whole of the manor of Bellingham would seem not to have been clear, two parts of it having once belonged to the ancient demesne of the king. Being summoned to make answer to the king touching this, he replies that his ancestors had held the manor in question, with all the appurtenances, from time immemorial, under the predecessors of the King of Scotland, by the service of being the foresters of the king throughout all his forests in Tynedale—Tynedale having been granted to William the Lion, to be held in homage of the King of England,—but that he “declined to litigate with his lord the king, and submitted the plea to his grace.”

The Chantry Chapel of St. Catherine, in the very curious stone-roofed church of Bellingham in Northumberland, was probably founded by this powerful family. Of their baronial stronghold nothing now remains, except perhaps its site be just indicated by an artificial mound on the east side of the Hareshaw-Burn, at no great distance from the Mill, which the De Bellinghams are known to have held of the Scottish king, paying for it, in 1263, the large rent for those times of ten pounds sterling.

The family has now altogether disappeared from the county where they were once so powerful. When they parted with the last of their possessions is hardly known; but it appears that certain quit-rents continued to be paid to a representative of the family for land in North Tynedale down to as late a period as 1774.

But whatever the fortunes of the Northumberland family, an important branch of it became established in Westmoreland through the Richard de Bellingham, who settled at Burneshead. He was succeeded in the occupancy of the manor by his son Robert, his grandson Richard, and then by his great-grandson Robert. Under this last Robert the family rose to increased distinction. He received the honour of knighthood, and in the 10th Henry V. was one of the jurors on the inquisition post mortem of John de Clifford, one of the noble family of the Westmoreland Cliffords, who was killed at the siege of Meaux in France in 1422. He married Elizabeth,

daughter of Sir Thomas Tunstall of Thurland in the county of Lancaster, and by her had eight sons, several of whom became founders of distinguished branches of the family in different parts of the country. From Richard, the second son, descended the Bellinghams of Lincolnshire; from Thomas, the fourth son, the Bellinghams of Sussex and Surrey; from Alan, the eighth son, the Bellinghams of Helsington and Levens, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of William Gilpin of Kentmere.

This Alan must by some means have acquired very considerable wealth, for, though the youngest of a numerous family, we read of him as the purchaser of large estates in this county,—Levens, Helsington, Gaythorne, and Fawcett Forest, besides divers lordships in Lancashire and Northumberland. He was Treasurer of Berwick and Deputy-Warden of the Marches; and he received from Henry VIII., in the last year of his reign, a grant of the fourth part of the barony of Kendal, called the Lumley Fee. Of him, in allusion to his social and, at the same time, martial disposition, was made the rhyme, still to be seen on the windows of Levens,—

“Amicus, Amico, Alanus,
Belliger, Belligero, Bellinghamus.”

His residence, however, when in Westmoreland does not seem to have been at Levens, but at Helsington. Possibly the house at Levens may have gone somewhat to decay, for the later members of the Redeman family seem to have been in no way distinguished in the county, as their ancestors had been, and perhaps had ceased to reside at it. Certain it is that it was purchased by Alan Bellingham of one of the Redeman family, who is described as “of Thornton near Eggleston in Yorkshire.”

The immediate successors of Alan Bellingham, viz., his son Thomas, and his grandson, a second Alan Bellingham, continued to reside at Helsington. Under the latter the family possessions do not seem to have diminished, for by an inquisition after his death in 1577, it was found that he was seised of the manors of Over Staveley, Nether Staveley, Hugill, Sadgill, Fairbank, Grasmere, Langdon, Potter Fell, Vowflatt, Ulthwaite, Rutherhead, Sabergh, Crookfell, Westwood, and Roger Holme, an island on Windermere, with fishery in the waters of Windermere, Skegglewater, and

Grasmere. He was buried in Kendal Church, as others of his family had been, and a brass, recording his name with those of his two wives and of his children, may still there be seen. He was succeeded in his possessions by his son James, who was knighted by King James at Durham on the occasion of his first coming into England in 1603, and who would appear to have been previously one of the chief gentlemen of the county, for in the year 1593 his name occurs, together with that of Thomas Strickland (the only two of the gentlemen of Westmoreland) in a reply given to Lord Scrope, Warden of the Western Marches, on his asking advice from the gentlemen of Cumberland and Westmoreland on divers points affecting the public weal, among others,—“What courses were most meet to be taken for good order among the surname of the Grames,” who “had no commander under the Lord Warden,” and had rendered themselves obnoxious by their lawless proceedings. These gentlemen advised the Lord Warden that he should “regard himself as standing officer over the turbulent clan until one should be specially appointed, and that they ought to be held obedient to his lordship or summarily dealt with in default.” It would appear, however, that notwithstanding promises to the contrary, the Grames still continued to give trouble, for in 1603 a proclamation was issued by James I. decreeing the “transplantation” of these Grames elsewhere, “to the intent that their lands may be inhabited by others of good and honest conversation,” and a tax was assessed and levied to meet the expense connected with such “transplantation,” which was actually carried out at a cost of nearly 400*l*. This was followed in 1614 by another proclamation for apprehending the Grames returned from “transplantation,” in which the king “strictly prohibits that none of the Grahmes hereafter do presume to return into our nation of England and Scotland out of Ireland, or the cautionary towns of the Low Countries whereunto some of them are sent, and are since returned to Ireland without special license.” I mention this because it is somewhat curious to find that one of this very clan of the Grahmes proscribed under James I.,—a Sir James Grahme, of whom we shall have to speak further presently, brother to the “Goodman of Netherby” (as the head of the house is styled in an enumeration of the different branches of the family),—should be holding the office of

Privy Purse to James II., and should be actually in possession of the estate owned by the Sir James Bellingham who, some eighty years before, had taken part in promoting the disgrace of the family.

To return, however, to this Sir James Bellingham. He it was who commenced and, in a great measure, carried out the extensive alterations which made the house in its main features what we now see it, and by which it became transformed from a grim Pele tower into a stately Elizabethan mansion. Those alterations can be traced without difficulty, and are identified as the work of Sir James, through the practice, which at this time became prevalent, of carving on some conspicuous place of a building the name or initials of the owner, together with the date of the completion of the work. Thus, on the carved oak chimney-piece of the dining-room we have his initials I. B. with the date 1586; also the same initials, with the date 1595, on the still handsomer oak chimney-piece of the drawing-room, showing the work of transformation to have extended over a number of years. Then on the stone fireplace of the servants' hall, in addition to the I. B., we have A. B., the initials no doubt of his wife Agnes, daughter of Sir Henry Curwen of Workington. This chimney-piece I take to have been originally the chimney-piece of the hall, and to have been removed here in the time of Sir James Grahme, who substituted for it the one now there (and inserted others of similar pattern in different rooms of the house), and who seems to have built up from the ground that angle of the house where what is called the servants' hall is situated. The same initials, I. B. A. with the date 1617, occur on a piece of oak carving, over the panelwork that extends across the south end of the hall, which it will be observed is of older date than the rest of the panelwork, probably of Henry VIII.'s time, and will be recognised as the old "screen" with its two doors of entry, and which must have been removed from its original position as a screen, probably by Sir James Bellingham, and placed against the end wall to increase the size of the chamber. There is a screen of very similar construction still *in situ* at Burneside Hall.

The alterations made by Sir James Bellingham are interesting as marking many features of domestic architecture characteristic of the period. The windows throughout the

building (with the exception of a few which are later) are insertions made at this time. These, it will be observed, are large and admit ample light. The comparatively peaceful state of the country rendered it unnecessary to study security and strength in this feature of a building so much as formerly: glass too was cheaper; and stained glass, which had been hitherto used chiefly in the adornment of churches, was now introduced into the windows of domestic buildings as a means of adding to the beauty of their more important chambers. Previously to this period it had been no uncommon thing for windows to remain unglazed, wind and rain being excluded by wooden shutters; and even after glass was used, it was frequently fitted into wooden casements, which were inserted into the stonework of the window while the lord was in residence, and were removed and carried along with him when he left, to do duty for his comfort in his next place of abode. Then further in the remodelling of the house at this period, there are other indications of the altered habits of living, arising out of the decline of the feudal system, and the consequent change in the relative positions of the lord and his retainers. The latter ceased to be serfs attached to their lord, and became labourers and workpeople, receiving wages and living with their families in their own separate dwellings. The lord's establishment, therefore, no longer comprised, in addition to personal attendants and servants discharging the menial offices of the house, the armourer, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the cooper, and so on, with their assistants, all living under his roof and eating at his cost. A numerous class of artisans had sprung up, working on their own account, and to them the handicraft work of the hall being intrusted, the lord's staff of dependents became reduced to pretty much the domestic servants of the present day.

Then the growth of wealth, incident to more peaceful times, led to habits of increasing refinement. The custom had been gradually coming on, and in the beginning of the sixteenth century had become general, for the lord and his family to dine apart from the retainers. This necessitated a separate chamber for that purpose. Then more ample and more commodious sleeping accommodation was called for. To meet these demands the grand old hall, in which lord and vassals had been wont to partake of their meals together, and which had been the sleeping quarters of the latter at

night, was generally sacrificed, and went far to provide the additional accommodation required. It was often divided up into three separate storeys by means of two floors, one placed about seven or eight feet from the ground, the other about double that distance from the first. On the ground level a range of servants' offices was thus obtained; above this was a handsome banqueting hall, and over this again, beneath the roof, a suite of bedrooms.

The banqueting room, though inferior in grandeur to the lofty open-timbered hall, was still a stately chamber; the same in area, if not made larger by the removal of the screen against the end wall, and with a ceiling of enriched plaster work placed at a sufficient height to give it a handsome proportion. The tapestry with which the old hall had been hung was removed for the adornment of other rooms more occupied by the family, and was replaced by oak panel-work to the height of eight or ten feet from the floor, the interval between it and the ceiling being made up with decoration in plaster. The banqueting hall at Levens is a good specimen of the transformation I have described. A floor was introduced into the old hall a few steps below the level of the Lord's Solar, leaving sufficient height for the servants' offices below. The second floor is so placed as to give to this handsome room sufficient loftiness in proportion to its length and breadth. The usual oak paneling lines the walls for about two-thirds of their height, having displaced the tapestry, which may yet be seen in other rooms of the house. The ceiling, and the wall space between it and the paneling, are enriched with elaborate plaster ornamentation picked out with gilding and colour; over the fireplace are thus represented the arms of Elizabeth, with the arms of the Bellinghams (argent three bugles or hunting-horns sable garnished and furnished or) on either side. A row of shields, filling compartments of the wall and beginning from the oriel window, show different alliances of the family. On the first shield are the arms of Bellingham, and Burnishead of Burnishead, united. These arms occur on the dexter half of the next three shields, while on the sinister are the arms of Gilpin of Kentmere (showing the marriage of Alan, the purchaser of Levens) and two others; on the fifth, sixth, and seventh shields these arms are displayed on the sinister half while other arms occupy the dexter; on the last three

shields they still occupy the sinister side, while the dexter remains vacant for the reception of other bearings as other alliances occurred. Among the minor devices on the ceilings and walls are the Tudor badge, the rose surmounted by a crown, the white and red roses of York and Lancaster united, and the bugle-horn of the Bellinghams. The stonework of the fireplace is of more recent insertion, and is probably part of further alterations made towards the end of another century by its then owner, Sir James Grahme. The original fireplace, as I have before said, may, I think, be seen in the servants' hall, a portion of the building certainly altered by him.

Whether the Bellingham entrance was where it now is, or, where it had previously been, through the entrance-tower, I cannot say. I am inclined to think the former was its position, though the stonework of the door is of more modern work, and would seem to be an insertion by Sir James Grahme.

The present drawing room was, I consider, the Lord's Solar, which served, we know, as the withdrawing room of ruder times; but it has been lengthened, and the Lady's Boudoir, now the Library, has been added. By this alteration the spiral stone stair which ought to have been found here has been removed, and in its place has been substituted the present more commodious oak staircase; the solid construction of which (each stair being a block of oak, since cased over) together with the form of the banisters, would point this out as being a portion of the Bellingham alterations. This staircase gives access, as the stone stair had done before, to the bedrooms over the Lord's Solar, which formed the upper storey of what, though hardly recognizable as such now, from the altered state of the roof, was once, I conceive, the main tower. At the other end of the hall, is a room which I take to be a part of the building of considerable antiquity. It is over a room which is entered by one of the pointed doorways spoken of before, as existing in the basement storey of the house, and which may go back to the 14th century. It is possible the ancient kitchens and other offices may have stood here, and that in the remodelling of the house, those now in use were substituted for them by Sir James Bellingham; and that I think probable. The room alluded to shows, in the panel-work over the fireplace, the

initials J. B., and the date 1586, and was, I think, appropriated by Sir James as the family dining room, when altered customs had rendered the banqueting room, which took the place of the old hall, needlessly large for ordinary use, and only suitable for the occasional grand entertainments of social hospitality. The stamped and gilded leather of old Spanish or Italian workmanship with which the walls of this room are covered, though put up not many years ago, did but replace a decoration of the same material (now to be seen in another part of the house) which was probably part of the original adornment of the room at the time of Sir James's alterations, showing it to have then been one of the choice rooms of the house; for this mode of decorating important rooms was one then of recent introduction, and much in favour. Adjoining this room at the East end is one which is called the "Chapel bedroom." Whether this apartment takes its name from occupying the site of a former domestic chapel, or from being contiguous to the recess in the hall beneath the principal staircase, which, having been expressly fitted up and continually used for family prayers, goes by the name of "the Chapel," I cannot say; but I am inclined to the former opinion, because, exactly in the same position, with an eastern direction, and immediately adjoining an important apartment as here, there is at Burneside Hall a chamber, which without any doubt was a chapel; and that house having been long the seat of the family it is not unreasonable to suppose that it would be taken as a sort of model for any reconstruction at Levens; as, indeed, it certainly was from many details of ornamentation to be found in both buildings. The same may also be said of Gaythorn Hall, one of the other purchases of the first Alan Bellingham, which was put in order either by him or one of his immediate successors, where similar details are found, and where also a domestic chapel existed. It may be remarked also in passing, that at Hel-sington Laithes, also purchased by the same Alan, and where he resided when in Westmoreland, there is a chamber having a handsome stone window which is still called "the Chapel." Whatever may have been the custom of the time, it would seem that this family considered a domestic chapel a necessary part of their residence. If this conjecture be correct, Sir James Grahme, who certainly altered this part of the house, must have converted the domestic chapel into a room,

and have made the substitute for it, beneath the staircase, which certainly was constructed by him. The access to the bedrooms above the dining room and the banqueting hall had previously been by the spiral stone stair in the entrance tower.

This certainly gave to them a more commodious approach; it is the most important, and indeed the only alteration worthy of notice as regards the house itself, which marks its change of ownership from the Bellingham family to Sir James Grahme.

This took place about the year 1690. The last of its Bellingham possessors was an Alan as its first had been; but, of a widely different character, he, by extravagance, dissipated the vast estate of which the first had laid the foundation, and which had been enjoyed with honour, and added to from time to time by successive generations of descendants.

Sir James Grahme who purchased Levens from him, together with all his Westmoreland possessions, was a younger brother of Sir Richard Grahme of Netherby, in Cumberland.³ He was privy purse to king James II. Bidding adieu to Court life, on the misfortunes of his royal master, he seems to have sought the retirement of the country, and to have purchased Levens as his place of future residence. And here he led for many years the life of a country gentleman, discharging its duties and maintaining its position not less worthily, it would seem, than so many of the former occupants of the house had done, for he was elected, as many of them had been, to represent the county in Parliament, and continued to have that honour conferred upon him on many successive elections.

Sir James married Dorothy, daughter of William Earl of Berkshire. The issue of that marriage was a son and a daughter. The latter, Catherine, inherited the property. She was married to her cousin, Henry Bowes Howard, Earl of Berkshire; and thus the illustrious name of Howard became connected, as it has since continued, with the place.

Additions to the building since Colonel Grahme's time comprise a suite of bedrooms over the Bellingham kitchens, and a long range of buildings at right angles to these, called

³ Sir Richard Grahme was created by Charles II., in 1681, Viscount Preston, in the Peerage of Scotland. He was ambassador to the court of France, and

appointed one of the principal secretaries of state in 1688. Douglas, Peerage of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 375.

the "White End," affording further bed-room accommodation, with a variety of offices beneath; the latest of all being the tower at the angle, which adds so much to the picturesque effect of the garden front of the house. This was erected under the good taste of the late Colonel the Hon. Fulke Greville Howard, a member of the Templetown family, of the Irish peerage, and husband of the present widely-loved and venerated owner, the Honourable Mary Greville Howard, for her especial use. From the windows of her little boudoir in it, and from the other rooms above, the most charming views are obtained of the quaint gardens to which Levens owes at least one half of its celebrity.

Of these gardens it remains, in conclusion, to speak. Forming, as they do, the chief work of Sir James Grahme, they serve as the real mark of its transfer from the second to the third great family of owners.

Doubtless the Elizabethan mansion of the Bellinghams had its pleasance, with its stiff parterres and terraced walks perfumed with roses and other old English flowers, as all country houses of the period had; but as these had displaced the courtyard, with its embattled wall of enclosure, and moat, and entrance gateway, forming the outer defences of the old Pele Tower of the Redemans,—so were these, in turn, displaced by the more extensive pleasure-grounds of the succeeding age, of which we have here a wonderfully perfect example, since there is evidence to show that in all their main features—and one might almost say even in their details—they have been handed down exactly as at first planned.

They were laid out by one Monsieur Beaumont, a Frenchman, whose portrait hangs in the entrance-tower, and who is thereon described as "gardener to King James II., and to Colonel James Grahme," and as having "laid out the gardens at Hampton Court Palace and at Levens."⁴

⁴ The inscription is as follows:—"Monsieur Beaumont, Gardener to King James 2nd and to Col^l Ja^s Grahme. He laid out the Gardens at Hampton Court and at Levens." It is singular that the merits of so skilful an artist should have been unnoticed by writers on Horticulture, and also that the part taken by him at Hampton Court has been ignored. The gardens there, as existing in 1691, are noticed in Gibson's account of Gardens near London,

Archæologia, vol. xii. p. 181. Lysons states that they were laid out in the reign of William III. by London and Wise, in the fashion then prevalent. *Environs of London*, vol. v. p. 72. Daines Barrington, in a treatise on the Progress of Gardening, mentions the gardens at Hampton Court, and seems to attribute their decoration to Queen Mary, who lived much there. He observes that the reign of James II. produced, probably, "no great alteration

The gardens are in the style called "topiary," from the "opus topiarium" of the Romans, a term applied by them to the trees and shrubs clipped into various fantastic shapes, either alone or in groups or extending in long lines, which form the chief feature of this kind of gardening. It was one in which the Romans—and when their taste was considered at its best—took great delight. It may have been borrowed by them from those garden-loving nations the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians; so at least one might conjecture from garden scenes on the walls of Egyptian tombs, and from descriptions of the hanging gardens of Babylon and Nineveh. But the fondness of the Romans for gardens in this style we know from many of their authors, who minutely describe them. Pliny, in particular, has given us an account in great detail of the gardens of his Tusculan villa, now Frascati, a portion of which was laid out in this style;—so minutely and so carefully, indeed, are all its details described, that his account has served to guide the laying out of all such gardens since the revival of classical learning, when it became the rage to reproduce, as far as any traces afforded the means, all the arts of Roman civilisation. These gardens were brought into vogue again in Italy by the Medici family, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and intercourse with Italy speedily led to their adoption in other countries. Francis I., in building Fontainebleau, laid out part of the gardens in this manner; but under Le Nôtre, who lived a little later, and who has been considered one of the ablest gardeners of any age, this style attained a degree of perfection fully equalling, if not excelling, anything described by Pliny. It was under his superintendence, and the lavish munificence of Louis XIV., that the gardens of

in the royal gardens, but his successor introduced or gave a vogue to clipt yews with magnificent gates," &c. *Archæologia*, vol. vii. p. 124. Switzer, an eminent gardener of that period, asserts that during the reign of William gardening arrived at its highest perfection. *Ichnographia Rustica*. See also Loudon's *Encyclopædia of Gardening*, vol. i. p. 315. By Walpole, whilst keenly criticising the improvements by London and Wise, who "stocked our gardens with giants, animals, monsters, coats-of-arms and mottoes, in yew, box, and holly," Beaumont is not even named; we seek also in vain, in the supplementary

anecdotes, for any allusion to his works. Walpole's *Anecdotes*, edit. Dallaway, vol. iv. pp. 262, 290. Beaumont may have accompanied Grillet, the eminent assistant of Le Nôtre, when he was brought over in 1694 to complete the grand designs for the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Chesterfield. It must be admitted that no trace has been found of any work that can be ascribed to Beaumont as royal gardener in this country, in the short reign of James II., 1685-88, and that the "topiary" style, so admirably illustrated at Levens, does not appear to have been introduced before the time of his successor.

Versailles, St. Cloud, and St. Germain were laid out, the former at a cost of no less than two hundred millions of francs. From France the fashion passed over into this country ; and it is possible enough that King James II., when desirous of laying out his Hampton Court gardens in this style, would, from his intimacy with the French court, seek a competent man for his purpose from the great French master of the art, and that Beaumont, to whom the work was confided, was a pupil recommended for his proficiency. Known to Colonel Grahme whilst at court, he no doubt accepted employment under him when the misfortunes of their common master brought their respective engagements to a close ; and under his able superintendence the gardens of the Colonel's newly acquired property were planned and carried out.

There are some interesting and amusing scraps of information, connected with the work whilst in progress, to be gathered from letters still preserved, addressed to Colonel Grahme by persons in his employment, which may be worth quoting.

Thus, soon after a commencement had been made, in the autumn of 1701, a terrific storm seems to have raged, the effects of which are described in a letter by the steward, James Loftus, a shrewd, intelligent man, but a very bad speller, in this graphic manner : "I am very soury," he writes, "to send you this bad newes, but its such a thing as hath not bene in this countrey in no ag of man that is a liffe now at prasent. Wind and Raine. The wind hath blown down, in the parke, hallfe the best eash trees that is in the parke, and done a boundinance of harme in others, that is in blowing down littel birchers. Their is but one ocke tree, but it is a very good one and all shiffeard too bits, it stod upon the bank by Lady Cloase, some aeshers by it It hath done great damedg in the garden a mongst trees. bemun" (Mr. Loftus' phonetic rendering of Beaumont) "is very much disturbed about is trees, he wants stakess for them."

Great damage also was done to the park wall ; the "dear house" was blown off its "pillows ;" some windows of the house were broken, and "some holle lites blown out" and slates blown off. A great "dell of Laranes houses thack" was blown off : the "Peat Coat bethewett green" (Beathwaite Green) "was all down," and continued wet, so characteristic of a Westmoreland winter, impeded the progress of the work.

In February 1702, the 9th, the same correspondent writes, "We have had very bad wether, and wett the hole house in generall, beat and Raind in, and Espeshly on all your side the house, and the tower upon your sied." On the 6th of the same month, he writes—"the garden gos one as fast as the wether will give leive, the walls is not finished as yeatt, but will in a short time now. I will pris all I can to gett it finished. Your eveer fathfull and duty full sarvant, whilst I am, JAMES LOFTUS." On the 26th of the same month, we have:—"Yours the 19 I resaved, and yesterday one from Mr. Grahme, with some seeds in it for bemant, and he hath sown some of them last night. We begin to go forward a letell beter than we did, but the wether moist still." In spite, however, of unfavourable weather, "bemant" is reported to be very hard at work "trinchng and digin, and putting all in order that is finished."

An untoward accident then occurs somewhat to retard the work. "The ould, brocken wiudid coach hors dyd this day comeing from Millthropp with a sacke of otes upon his back. We shall not know what to do in the garden for him, and the other all most killd weth contennually woarking." But matters look more cheerful in March. "Things are well," says the "fathfull" James Loftus. "Apriell the 12th, the hounds and horsse and the garden begins to look well now." Still his accounts give scarcely sufficient details to satisfy the interest taken by his master in the progress of the work. "Sir, I beg your pardon that I did not give you an account of the achorns and beach nots befor; they wear planted as soon as they came, and I thought it was not much mater to give every partickler of the garden, but beamant hath moved all that quarter that was mad last year. the moole of it into other quarters and borders that wanted, that is the quarter whear you say you will have the boulling green, and hath put all the borders in as good order as he cane, he is now mooving and altering his flowers and plants, and allso hath poulled down the heg was roun the melion ground and hath planted the helli bore round tha place, and he got very good staex coot and set round it, and hath raild and bound it very well, and made the carpenters cout out the stakes out of the hart of a good eish tree, and he hath sown pese, benes, and such things as those, now he is upon makeing his hot beds and leading doun into the garden whear it wants; he

hath made the hill something lesse then it was when you went, he keeps tuing at it. We have very litell frost to huld. Feb. 25, 170 $\frac{2}{3}$. James Loftus."

Another correspondent, one Timothy Banks, reports :—"Mr. Beomant has planted and sowne all the ground that lyes against the new building which was set forth when you were here, and has planted the borders round, and has planted that part of the new plantation at the end next the chiz with greens and beech plants in so excellent order to everybody's admiration here that I am sure you will take great delight in it when you come ; and all along the end of the garding next Hershams he has planted two rows of chestnuts and lime trees, and amongst them with beech, which makes a very noble walk. He has likewise levelled a great piece of the other plantation which lyes on the other side of this newly planted ; he is now clearing all the borders round the house, and levelling the ground. In the flower garding he has made a hot bed, and has sown the mellon seeds you sent by post, and cowcumbers, and has gotten frames made and glasses. They are come up finely ; he does not doubt but they will doe as well here as any where. He goes on Monday next to Sir Christopher Musgrave's."

Allusion is made, we may observe, in these letters to the principal features of the garden existing at the present day—the bowling green, the beech hedges, the greens (meaning no doubt the evergreens), the rows of limes, chestnuts, and beeches at the end of the garden next Heversham, all now stately trees. These limes, it may be noted in passing, must have been among the first of this kind of tree planted in England, introduced as they were during William III.'s reign (about 1695) from Holland, where they were favourite trees. And from the stout ash stakes mentioned in the letters we may infer that the trees, which they were needed to steady against the wind, must have been of considerable size when planted, and if this were the case with the evergreens, they were probably shaped somewhat into the forms intended for them afterwards to present ; and by this means the general design of the garden, together with much of its detail, would be realised at once.

And thus for a good part of two centuries this garden has continued substantially what we now see it. How many successive generations have strolled pleasantly along those

same long straight walks of gravel and sweeps of lawn, and have looked with pleasure on those fantastically-shaped yews and box trees and hollies,—those same high walls of smooth-cut beech, and those same stiff, box-bordered beds! Yes, have looked with pleasure; for though this style of gardening has gone out of favour, and critics have pronounced the tree-clipping a barbarous mutilation of nature, and the stiff, straight lines of the walks and flower-borders an offence to the eye which nature has made to delight in flowing curves, still people will look upon it with pleasure. In spite of all that can be urged against it, there is a charm in such gardens not to be gainsaid. To call them “formal and artificial” is not necessarily dispraise. As an adjunct to the palace or the mansion the artificial is in place; the stiff lines of terrace walks and beds close about the house accord with the stiff lines of its architecture; and the garden, with its formal arrangement of trees and shrubs, is needful to blend the house with the flowing lines and wilder forms of nature around. Then the clipped forms of yews and box and holly, with their smooth-shaven surfaces, look so sleek and comely, that nature seems hardly to regard such treatment as a mutilation; and one might almost imagine, so well do they thrive and grow under it, that she had expressly designed them to receive it. For these charming evergreens, so essential by their brightness and their hardy nature to the winter beauty of our gardens, would soon outgrow the space assigned them, and must needs be cut down, were it not for their readiness to endure the pruning knife and shears. The annual clipping keeps them to the exact size and shape their position requires; and, growing equally well, however trimmed, angular flat-sided forms are given to some to make them accord with the square forms of the house, the terraces, and box-bordered beds, while the rounder and pyramidal shapes make others harmonize better with the plants and shrubs of smaller growth in their natural state around.

Thus, year after year, they fill the same places, making the garden for generations substantially the same. And there is pleasure in this permanence. What we are looking upon with pleasure is precisely what generations before us have looked upon with pleasure, and what will be, or may be, handed down for the gratification of generations to come. Then, be it remembered, in gardens such as these, within the



Levens Hall, Westmoreland.
From a drawing by the Rev. G. F. Weston, M.A.

limits of less than half a dozen acres, what an amount and what a variety of pleasures to the garden-lover are gathered together : pleasures for all seasons of the year and varying with every day of the year. Planned with a view both to sun and shelter, here the earliest signs of returning flower-life are seen. The year has hardly turned ere snowdrops and aconites and crocuses show their heads above the soil ; and when spring has well set in, there is already brightness among the box-edged beds ; and close at hand are the pear-trees and the apples and the plums laden with blossom, and encircling walls are pink with the well-trained nectarines and peaches ; and pleasant it is to stroll up and down the level paths in the warm sunshine, sheltered from the sharp east winds.

Then in summer how charming the perfume from the roses and the self-sown mignonette and the scores of other hardy flowering plants, so dear to all who love old English gardens ! Pleasant, too, it is to stroll among the crops for kitchen use and note their growth and to refresh the parched mouth with strawberries and currants and other summer fruits just plucked from the bushes. Grateful then is the shade beneath the tall limes in the Wilderness, and pleasant in the cool evening an hour or two at bowls on the faultless green !

Then, as autumn comes on and flowers damp off and blacken under the heavy dews at night, one may turn from the unwelcome sight and be gladdened again by the crops of ripe, rich-coloured fruit, under which the trees close by are bending, and find brightness lingering yet.

And when winter at last returns and flowers and fruit are gone, and the yellow leaves have fallen, and the trees are bare, there are still the quaint forms of the box-trees and the hollies and the yews, all bright and green as ever, and the rich brown of the high beech walls, cheating winter of half its gloom.

These are pleasures dear, one and all, to the true lover of a garden ; and these pleasures he may have, day by day, throughout the year, in a garden such as this, as he strolls now here now there, the eye, the smell, the taste, all gratified in turn. Now shut in by walls and trees in sweet seclusion, he sees but the old gabled mansion and the quaint trees and the bright mosaic of the flower-beds, all choice tokens of

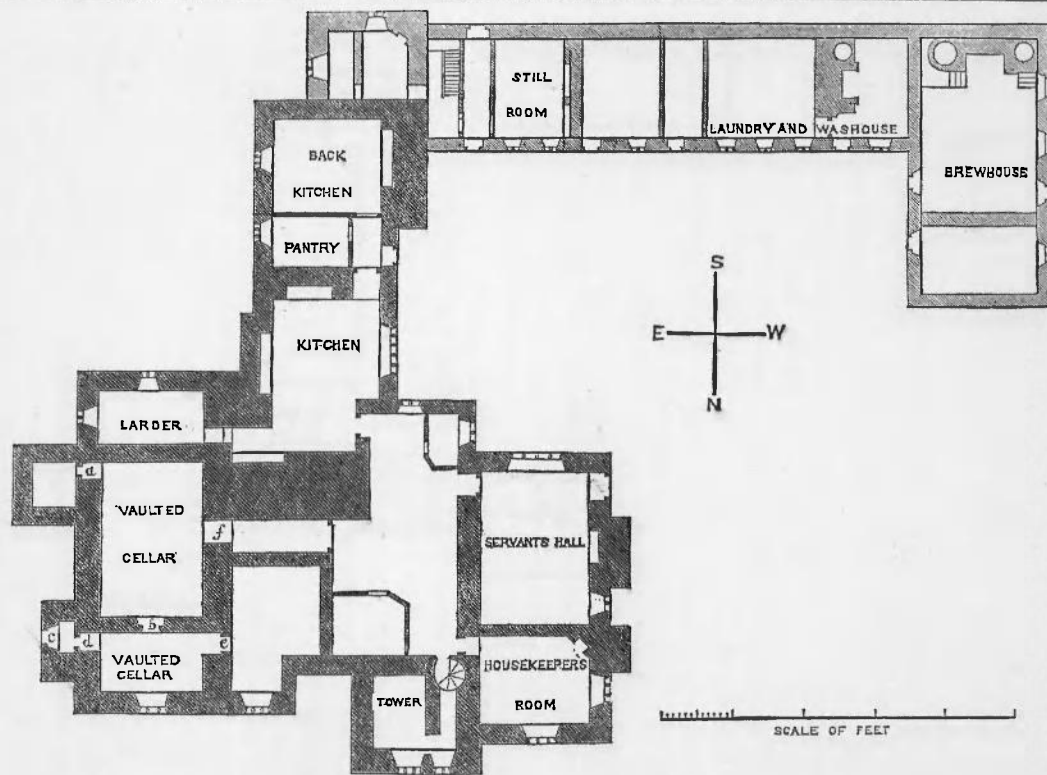
man's art ; and then, not far from this, the enclosing wall is wanting, and he sees that they who understood so well the artificial and could make it look so charming were lovers of nature too. A landscape of rare beauty lies opened out to view,—green sweeps of park-like pastures stretch out before him, with trees, here in wild beauty, singly and in groups, between the breaks of which are seen sweet peeps of ivied homestead and white limestone crag, and, far away, blue mountain ranges.

Very charming are these Levens gardens ! So think the good folks of Kendal and the country all around ; and no pleasanter day's excursion have they for the delight of friends coming from afar. So think too, as each 12th of May comes round, the joyous groups who flock thither on that day, when the mayor and aldermen of Kendal come, as of old custom, to do justice to the "radish feast," and when all the young athletes who can run and jump and wrestle spend a merry afternoon.

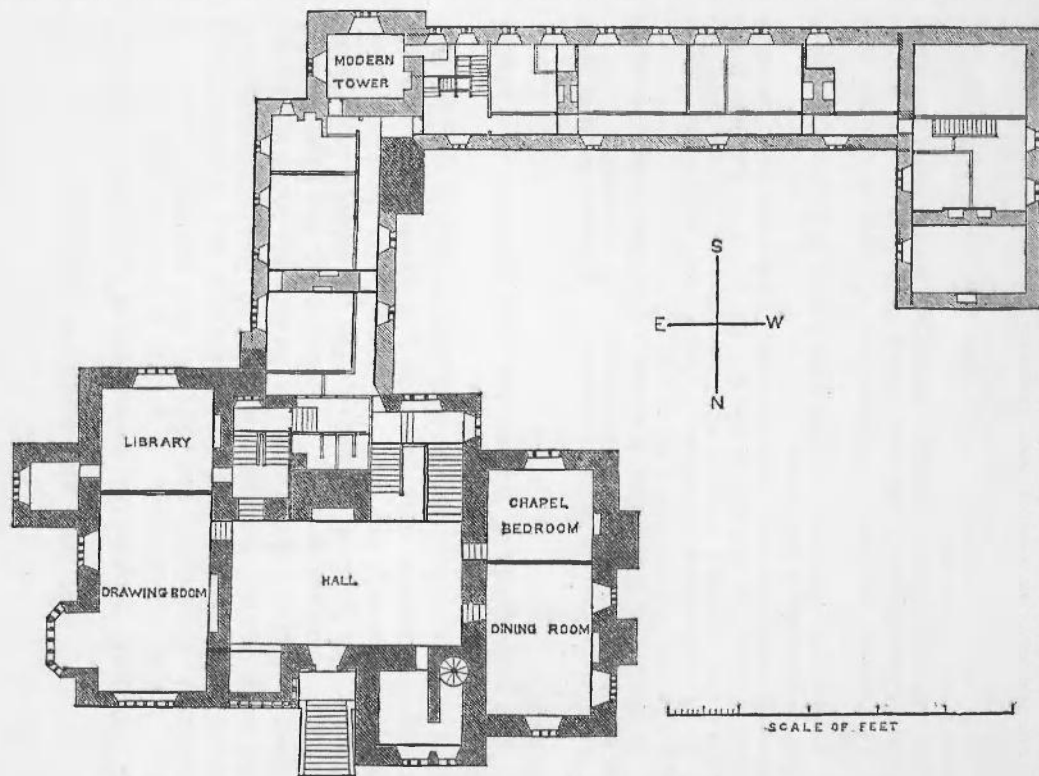
Few sights even of bonny Westmoreland are better worth a visit than this "dear old Levens," as it is often lovingly called. Few ever give to it a day of their tour among the lakes but find in the old house, with its carved oak furniture and fittings and its quaint gardens and romantic little park, a treat beyond what they had looked for and deem their day well spent.

And none ever pass a few days beneath its roof but find pleasant visions of its paneled rooms and bright garden scenes from the mullioned windows haunting the mind's eye afterwards ; and, as memory brings back the happy visit, they heartily repeat the wish, first uttered, as of old custom bound, when they sipped from the tall, stout glass, yclept "The Constable," at the meal that made them welcome to the house, that curious brown, strong drink, brewed here from time unknown, and called, but I know not why, "Morocco,"

"Luck to Levens as long as the Kent flows."



I. LEVENS HALL, WESTMORELAND. Ground-plan.
(a, b, c, d, e, ancient doorways with square-trefoiled heads ; f, doorway broken through.)



II. LEVENS HALL, WESTMORELAND. First floor.