

ART. XI.—*Little Strickland Hall and its Owners.* By
DANIEL SCOTT.

Read at the site, July 14th, 1911.

I HAVE heard it stated that on a former occasion, a good many years ago, the Society visited Little Strickland Hall, but I have been unable to find any confirmation of it. There is no reference to the subject in the list of meetings in Mr. Sparke's *Catalogue Index*, and possibly the statement may have originated from the fact that the late Dr. Taylor included an account of the building nearly twenty years ago in his *Manorial Halls of Cumberland and Westmorland*. I believe, however, that Little Strickland Hall was not included in the papers specially prepared for our *Transactions*.

Little Strickland Hall forms roughly the letter T, with the shank, or base, on the southern side. The larger portion of the buildings which go to make the shank are modern outhouses, the ancient structure beginning near the entrance. The door is formed of heavily-studded oak, but is modern. On the other hand, remarkably little alteration seems to have been made in the building, beyond the possible partitioning of some of the rooms. The stone work is very well preserved. Leaving the through passage from the entrance, there is at right angles another passage that leads into the hall, with the kitchen on the right. The ceilings, like those of all old houses, are rather low, but the effect of this is relieved by the oak wainscotting. The largest apartment, the hall, is 25 feet by 15 feet, and gets plenty of light from the mullioned windows. All the windows in the house are of the square mullion type, with one, two, or three lights. A considerable proportion of the old windows have been

bricked up. That would doubtless be done for the purpose of escaping the window tax, which was introduced in 1695, and continued with varying degrees of severity until July, 1851. Such a house as this, with more than twenty windows—all small when regarded from the modern standard—entailed an annual tax at one time of over £10.

There are two apartments in the Hall which deservedly attract notice. They are the extreme rooms on the north-west, at the end of the left limb of the T. The lower one is worthy of its name of the Lord's Parlour, being handsomely panelled in oak, dark with age but in splendid preservation. The ceiling is one of a kind with which antiquaries in the district are fairly familiar, there being examples in Gerard Lowther's house and Dockray Hall, Penrith; Barton Kirk, Hornby Hall, and other places. Unlike the ceiling in the Lord's Parlour of Gerard Lowther's house, which is remarkable for the number of its coats of arms, the only panel at Little Strickland is blank. The partitions are geometrical, of varied shapes, and each compartment has scrolls connecting roses, with a rose in the centre, and branches on each of the four sides. The moulding in a somewhat different form also covers the sides and bottom of the central beam. The moulding remains in an excellent state of preservation, there being few chipped places. In the bedroom overhead is more panelling in oak, extending to within about a foot of the ceiling. The intervening space on two sides is occupied by plaster showing birds, masks, flowers, and some scroll work; the centre beam is similarly covered. Since Dr. Taylor wrote his account of the Hall this chamber seems to have suffered, as along the cornice on two sides the moulding has disappeared. Mrs. Hodgson tells me that the plaster work has been in its present condition during the whole of the tenancy of her family, and I have not been able to find any explanation of it.

Over the fireplace, in the oak panelling, are two recessed panels with arches. That to the left bears the date 1612, but it is regarded as not part of the original fitting of the house, the structure being of fully a century earlier. On the right is the upper portion of a female figure, with arms crossed. This is obviously much more modern than that in the companion panel, and I have reason to believe that this carving is not the one described by Dr. Taylor. Further along the corridor is a small bedroom in which is a beautifully carved oak mantel with the fleur-de-lis, pine apple, and other patterns which are distinctively Elizabethan in their character.

Between the top of the staircase and what may be called the Lord's Bedroom is an indentation in the wall. It has been suggested that long ago there was possibly a circular staircase at this point. Dr. Taylor says that "from the mell doors a short passage led into the hall, having a spiral stair to the upper floor on the right, and a small room to the left." This, however, does not seem to correspond with the indentation of the wall to which I have referred, and I can find no explanation of it.

The other features of the house are not peculiar; they are such as may be found in most Tudor houses that have survived the vicissitudes of four centuries or more. The most notable change was made within the recollection of middle-aged people in the village. There was a wall 9 feet high, enclosing an outer and an inner courtyard. That doubtless was originally put up for the purpose of security, but in the quieter days of the nineteenth century there was no need for the erection. The wall was then pulled down, thereby doubling the size of the courtyard.

On entering the yard a square projecting frame or space attracts the eye, and one naturally looks for the story which would be told by armorial bearings. There are none now. A native of the village tells me, and Dr. Taylor confirms it, that there was formerly the Crackenthorpe coat of arms on the tablet.

A few words seem desirable as to the people who in the past have been the owners of Little Strickland Hall. The building was erected, say about 1540, by John Crackenthorpe, second son of that Christopher Crackenthorpe who according to his own inscription thereon built Newbiggin Hall in 1503. John settled at Little Strickland; his second son was the celebrated Dr. Crackenthorpe, logician, and chaplain to James I. Four generations of John's descendants lived at Little Strickland, without leaving any special mark on local history, before Richard Crackenthorpe sold the property to John Pattinson, of Thrimby, from whom it passed to the Lowthers.

It seems to me that for a long time there must have been more than one family of Crackenthorpe at Little Strickland, though it has not been possible to show any relationship. Thus, over the fireplace of the High Hall, on the opposite side of the road, appears the date 1600, and on the other side of the arch is a shield containing the Crackenthorpe arms. In another room is a further representation of the same distinction.

Little Strickland and Thrimby were formerly part of Morland parish, and paid church rates to Morland up to 1868. Great and Little Strickland and Thrimby were not made into a separate ecclesiastical district until 1870. Therefore we naturally turn to the Morland Registers in the hope of finding some trace of the Crackenthorpes who had settled at Strickland Hall—it is assumed—about 1540. The registers begin two years earlier, but if John Crackenthorpe set up housekeeping in the first half of the sixteenth century, he must have remained a bachelor for a considerable time. The identity of his wife is not known; there is no reference to his marriage at Morland. The first entry about his family comes much later than one would have expected. We have them in this order :

- 1567—January. Christned Richard Crakenthroppe sonne to John Crakenthroppe yt day [following an entry on the 30th].
 1569—April. Christened Barbarie Crakenthroppe doughtr of John Crakenthroppe ye iii daye.
 1570—1—Februarie. Christned Eliz[abeth] doughtr to John Crakenthroppe ye iiiii daye.

Then there is a ten years' interval until we get :—

- 1580—March. Christned Katheren Crakenthroppe doughtr to John Crakenthroppe ye xxv daye.

It is not until August, 1580, that the first instance occurs of places of residence being recorded, but none of these apply to the Crackenthorpes, who have three other entries :—

- 1582—June. Christned Anne Crakenthroppe doughtr to John Crakenthroppe ye xxvii daye.
 1583—August. Christned Marie Crakenthroppe doughtr to John Crakenthroppe ye xvii daye.
 1585—June. George Crakenthroppe sonne to John Crakenthroppe ye xxiv daye.

The next generation is recorded in some almost undecipherable pages of the registers, and I have not been able to trace the marriage of Richard, as to whose family we have these entries :—

- 1634—April. Chrystoned———daughter of Richard Crackenthorpe of Litle Strickland ye 18th daye.
 1637—June. Buried John sone of Richard Crackenthorpe of Litle Strickland the 23rd day.
 1640—Feb. Buried Dorothy daughter of Richard Crackenthorpe of Litle Strickland the 29th day.
 1640—March. Chrystoned Jane daughter of Richard Crackenthorpe of Litle Strickland the 17th day.
 1643—Nov. Chrystoned Marie daughter of Richard Crackenthorpe of Litle Strickland the last day.

None of these entries correspond with the known members of the family who undoubtedly owned and occupied Little Strickland Hall. There were others of the name

in the parish at a considerably later period ; there is, for instance, in the Carlisle Registry, the will, dated July 15th, 1709, of Richard Crackenthorpe, of Little Strickland. The terms indicate that he belonged to the yeoman class rather than to the rank of squire : " I give to my loving wife the sum of ten shillings,"—the same amount as he gave to his eldest son Richard. He gave " all the residue of my goods and chattels, money, plate, brass, pewther, beding, biles (bills), bonds, specialtys, and personall estate whatsoever " to his three younger children, Christopher, Ann, and Jane Crackenthorpe, " who I doe hereby constitute, ordain, and make joint executors." He appointed his " well beloved and trusty friends Ambros Nicholson, of Penrith, gentleman, and Robert Wilson, of the foresaid town, gentleman "—both being his brothers-in-law—supervisors of his estate, and gave each of them " the sum of two shillings and sixpence as a token of my trust reposed in them."

Several of the county histories lead readers to suppose that the Fletchers once owned Little Strickland Hall, though the assertion is not definitely made. I suggest that the Fletchers may have acquired the High Hall, that being the only other house of considerable size in the village at the time. Sir Daniel Fleming tells of several visits he paid to his friends the Fletchers :—

1667—Dec. 30 Paid at Strickland 9s 6d.

1668—9—Feb. 24. Spent at Strickland Hall, Lowther, Yainwith, Hutton, and Cockermouth, by myself and wife between Jan 25, 1668 and Feb 24, 1668, the sum of £4 10s.

1674—July 6-7-8 Spent at Strickland Hall for trimming 2s.

A little later, in 1684, Thomas Fletcher helped to found a yearly rent charge of £10 to be paid out of High and Low Sandriggs and Bryam Croft at Little Strickland, for the benefit of the school. Bryam Croft is to-day part of the High Hall Farm. Thomas Fletcher was a counsellor-at-law who took an active share in the public work of

his time, and was Recorder of Appleby in 1692. There is a tablet to his memory (1695) in the porch of Little Strickland Church. His wife was Mary, daughter of William Whelpdale, of Penrith, and widow of the Rev. Dr. Dawes, vicar of Barton; her memory is kept alive by a monument in Morland Church. Mary, the daughter of Thomas and Mary Fletcher, married Thomas Norton, of Grantley, Yorkshire, and from them is descended the present Lord Grantley.

Despite the popular local belief, I think it is an error to suppose that the Fletchers ever lived at Little Strickland Hall.

