

Notes on some Old Houses in Derby.

(SECOND PAPER).

BY GEORGE BAILEY.

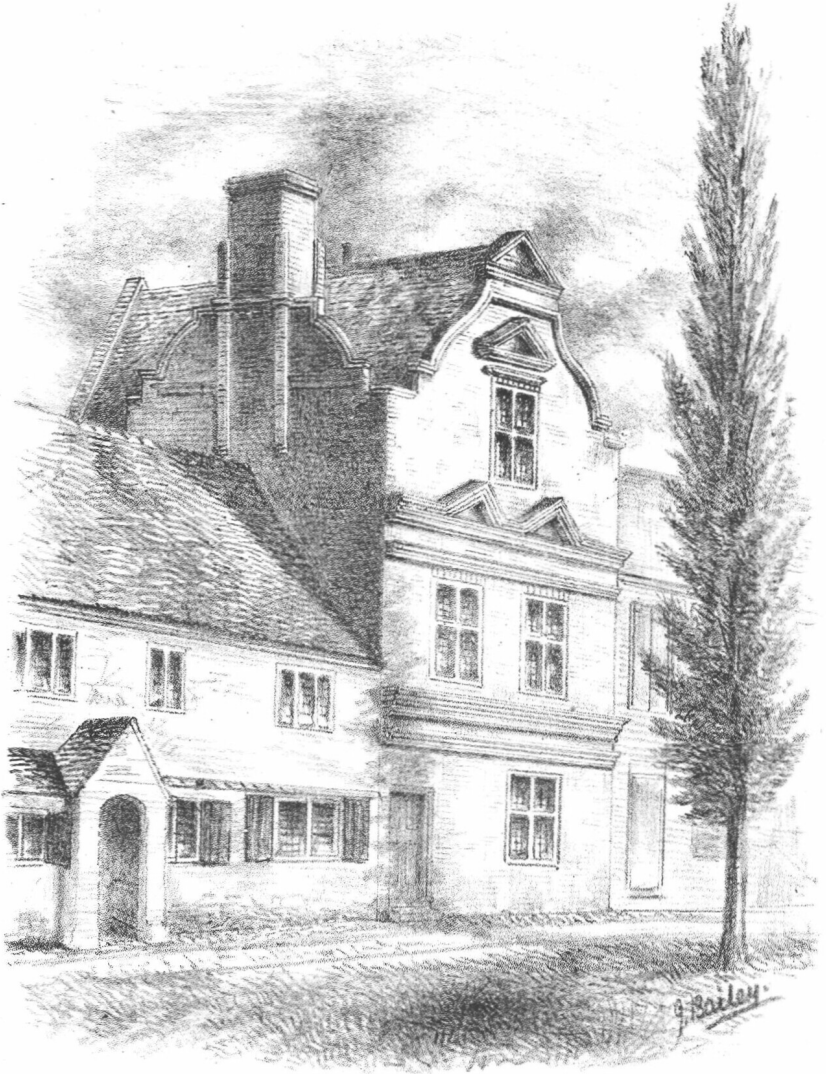
IN these concluding remarks, we desire to call attention to the well-known fact, that there is a meagreness of detail and poorness of design, which characterise all ancient houses in the lower story or ground floor. These give an appearance of top-heaviness, and sometimes where this has been repeated in successive stories, each being made to overhang the preceding one—of absolute unsafety. It is true that the lower story was, in some cases, built of stone or brick, while the stories above were constructed of timber frames, with lath-and-plaster, or boards between; and in those of a later date, these spaces were filled in with brick-work. These latter, however, had not so great a projection as the former. After both these styles had ceased, the same feature was still perpetuated to some extent by means of heavy courses of bricks, in the form of moulded string-courses, and heavy hoods to the windows; all these peculiarities of which we have written, must have originated in some necessity. It may naturally be asked, "What could that necessity have been?" Doubtless the exigencies of trade, and the securing greater safety in troublous times may be assigned as reasons in some cases; but these would only apply to later examples. A third reason may be found in the defective manner of draining the streets, which would cause the ground floor to be damp, and uncomfortable, besides being unhealthy; especially would this be the case, when it is recollected, that the rain water from



OLD HOUSE IN TENANT STREET.



OLD HOUSE AT HILTON.



OLD HOUSE IN ST. PETERS CHURCHYARD.

the roofs was usually poured from projecting spouts, directly on to the street below. We venture, however, to hazard another conjecture, to account for this peculiar characteristic of old houses, which dates very far back into remote antiquity, viz., that when the necessity for building houses on piles, on the margins of lakes, had passed away, the fashion was still continued, and is an indication of the rude life of former ages, just as we know that dogs show their original wild and undomesticated condition by turning themselves round several times before they lie down. Whether this hypothesis has any ground or not, there can be no doubt that many of these old houses give one the idea of a house placed on stilts. We have called attention to this singular characteristic to ascertain, if possible, from those better acquainted with such matters its true reason; and also because it will not fail to have been noticed, that all the oldest houses of which illustrations have been given, show this peculiar appearance of being over-built in their upper stories, more especially so in the lath-and-plaster houses of Amen Alley and St. Peter's Street.

The building of half-timbered houses of both kinds appears to have ceased about the reign of James I., when the use of bricks for building purposes became general. We may, therefore, conclude that the two half-timbered houses on Plate II. are of the 15th century and 16th century.

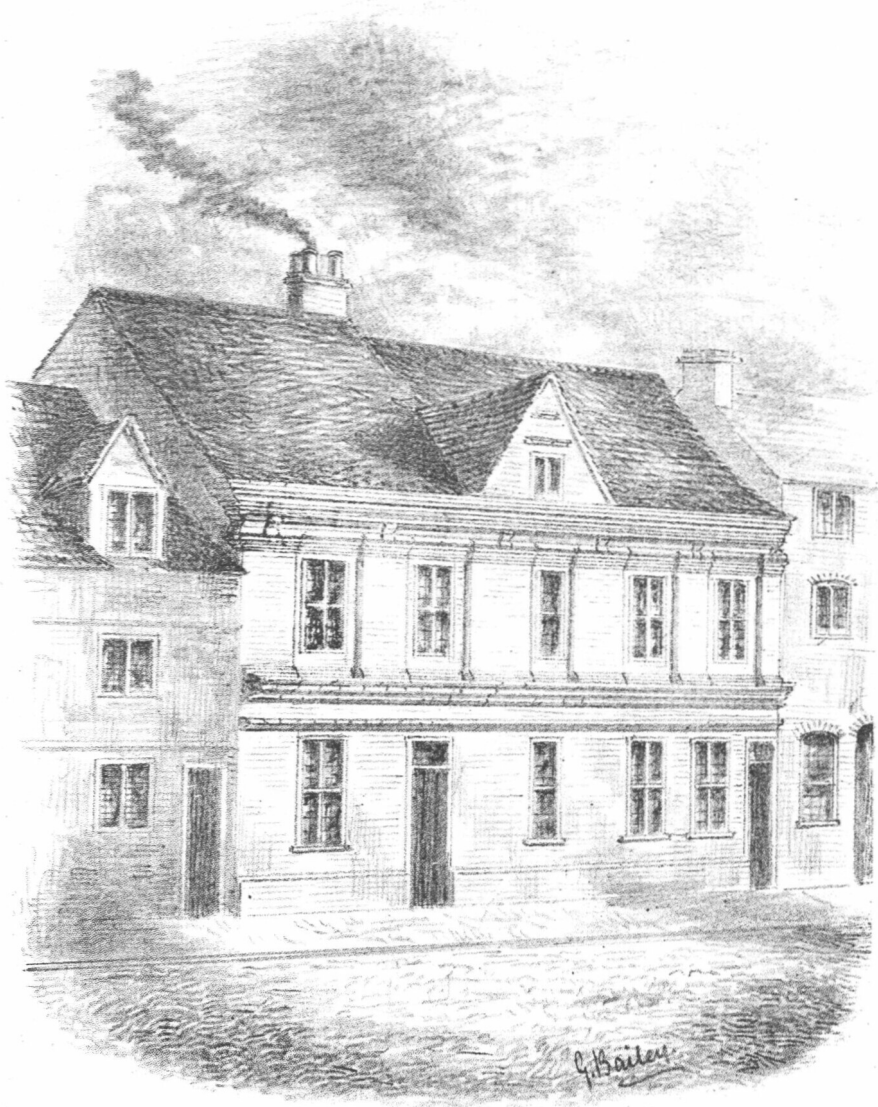
The fine half-timbered house in the occupation of Mr. Gadsby, hidden behind his house in Tenant Street, is very interesting, because it has been but little altered. We were told that the date of this house had been seen by several persons on the leads; but after making a careful search no such date could be found, and after making inquiries from the owner of the property, T. W. Evans, Esq., of Allestree, and of others who were thought likely to know something about it, we have had to give up all idea of arriving at the correct date. There is, however, in Parker's Glossary, Plate XLVI., Third Edition, an engraving of a house, formerly standing at Leicester, called King Richard's house, there being a story attached to it, to the effect that he slept there

previous to the battle of Bosworth Field, where he lost his life; and in comparing this drawing with the one we have made of the house in Tenant Street, there can be little doubt the dates are very nearly, if not identical, so that the probable date is 1483; and especially so as the styles correspond with what is called Perpendicular or Plantagenet, see the embattled leaden spouts over the oriel windows. The celebrated Dr. Darwin once lived in this house, but who were the original owners we have been unable to ascertain. We had thought that the house at Hilton had formerly been the manor house; but it proves to have been an inn; and it is said that when Mary Queen of Scots was taken to Tutbury, "Lord Stafford passed through Tutbury, plainly apparelled, with three or four attendants, and stayed at an alehouse in Hilton, whilst the Scotch Queen and her company passed by." This took place on the 13th of Jan., 1585,* so that it was standing in the middle of the 16th century. See Plate II.

Of the brick houses in St. Peter's Churchyard and Walker Lane, we have no correct date. They may have been built in the reign of William and Mary, and they have a decidedly Dutch look about them. These houses, drawn on Plates III. and IV. are both excellent examples, and worthy of study, although of course they are faulty in design and construction. The lower stories have the bald unfinished appearance before remarked upon; all this allowed, they are still very suggestive.

The "Old Seven Stars," on Plate V., bears the date 1680, so that it is clearly "Stuart," of the reign of Charles II. It will be seen, on comparing this group with the brick house in St. Peter's churchyard, that although it has a heavy course of brick mouldings, from which the second story rises, the gable of the roof differs altogether from the former; but that in Walker Lane has features in common with the latter, and may be Jacobean. There is a much better style about it than there is about the "Seven Stars," and the houses behind it.

* Sir Oswald Mosley's Hist. of Tutbury, p. 184, note 230. Mr. J. Charles Cox, however, tells us that he has little or no doubt that the old house at Hilton, was the manor house of a small sub-manor, held under the Duchy of Lancaster, by the Wakelyn family, in the sixteenth century.

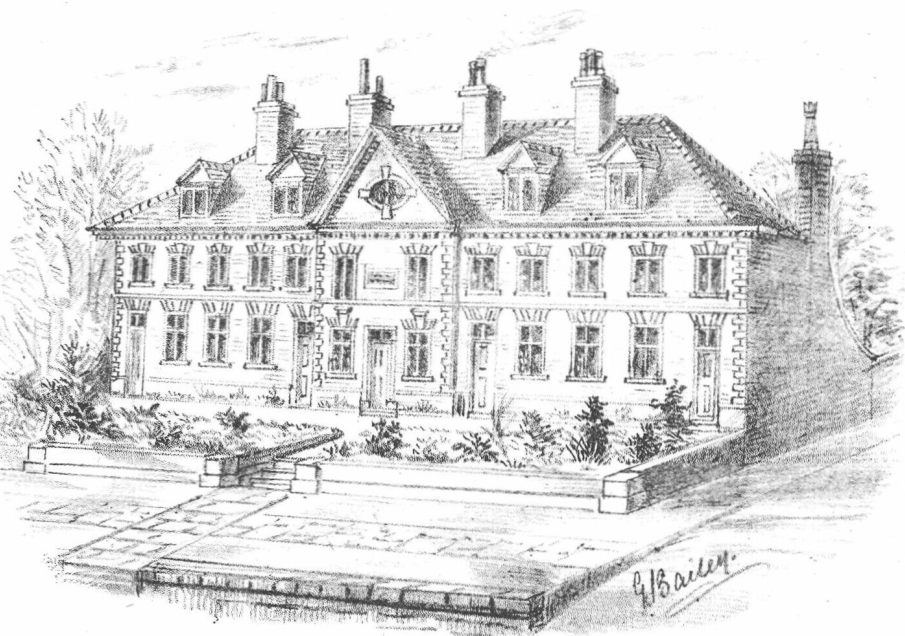


Old house in Walker Lane.

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1680
© 2 9



OLD SEVEN STARS, KING STREET.



LARGE'S HOSPITAL, FRIAR GATE.
(Palisading's United)

Large's Almshouses, Plate V., are of Hanoverian style, of the reign of George II. ; they are dated 1760.

Besides these old houses in Derby, of which we have given illustrations, there are not a few in the neighbourhood. At Burnaston may be seen quite a number of pretty half-timbered cottages, and a very fine old farm-house ; and at Breadsall will be found several cottages.

We have been much gratified to see the excellent restoration which has been made of the Old Hall at Breadsall ; it is eminently satisfactory, and Sir J. H. Crewe may be well congratulated on the good taste which dictated the preservation of that old family relic. Generally, "restorations," as they are popularly designated, are "destructions." How many interesting old Churches have been "restored" quite away, and a new structure erected ? the sight of which only causes reflections of anything but an agreeable nature, and gives rise to expressions not at all flattering to the perpetrators of such acts of stupid vandalism. But while the unnecessary destruction of old places and things is condemned, it must not be understood that we are in favour of tying men down to a slavish imitation of such remains in designing others ; there is far too much of this already. We are surrounded on all sides by valuable materials from which to construct something new ; therefore, let each man act according to his own idiosyncrasy in all matters of art, without the trammels which would-be critics too often endeavour to throw around it. The more the mind is filled with these fragments, so to speak, the more likely is it, by combining them, to produce new and pleasing forms and effects, just as by a shake of the Kaleidoscope new forms are produced, although it is only from the same bits of glass, and the same in number ; but by re-arrangement producing new and pleasing patterns—so will the independent mind, if it has free play, discover original designs. By not being condemned to work after a set of traditions, genius will succeed in producing endless variety and novelty ; but if it be tied down to tradition, and to work according to a certain set of what may well be

called, "art recipes," the end of such a course will inevitably be the production of nothing new or original, but of one dull uniformity, quite destructive to all right feelings, and to all freedom and independency of thought, without which it is impossible to do anything worth notice in any branch of art whatever. We cannot do better in bringing these remarks to an end, than give a quotation from one of our most accomplished writers on art, "The moral of all this is that we can hardly be too careful to preserve so precious a thing as the inborn quality of a person. An artist can never be, in the high intellectual sense, successful, unless he expresses his own idiosyncrasy in his art ; what is sometimes called success, the clever, well-learned mimicry of another's performance, is not success ; however lucrative, it is a wretched failure ; self-expression is success in the fine arts, providing, of course, that the self is worth expressing."