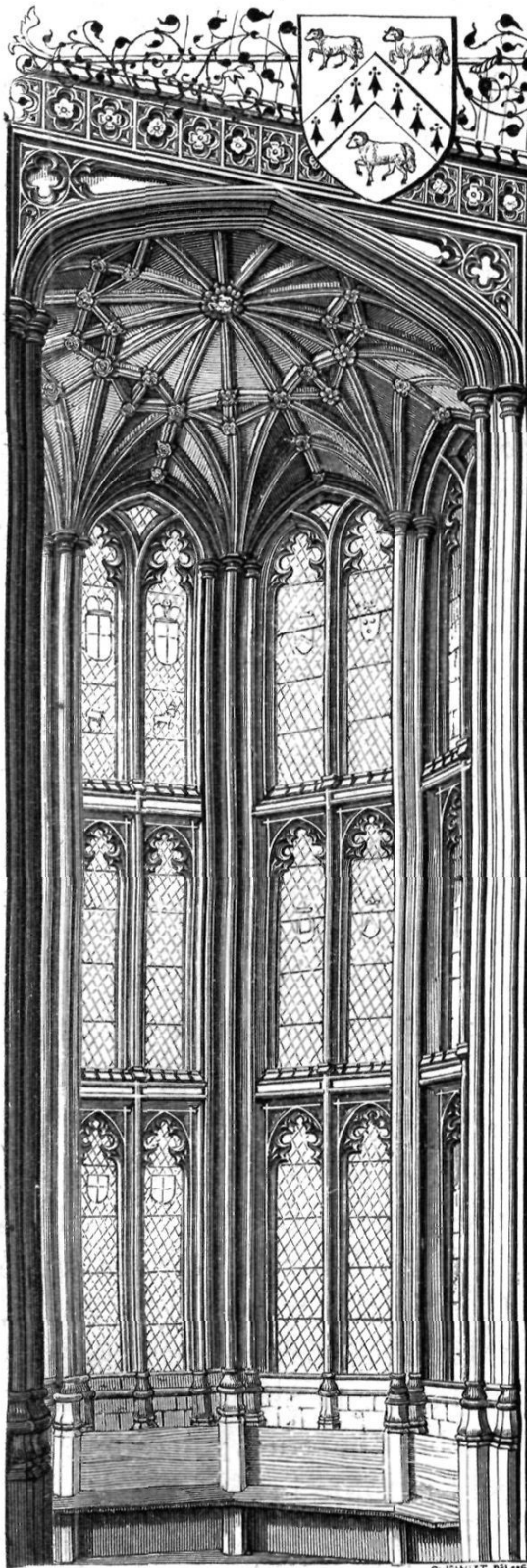


# A MEMOIR OF CROSBY PLACE.

BY THE REV. THOMAS HUGO, M.A., F.S.A., ETC.

(Read in Crosby Hall, Jan. 28, 1856.)



BAY WINDOW, CROSBY HALL.

It is the truthful remark of a well-known writer of ancient Rome, whose elegance and facility on the one hand, and whose knowledge of human nature on the other, have found admirers in every intellectual age, that,

“*Segnius irritant animos demissa  
per aurem,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta  
fidelibus, et quæ  
Ipse sibi tradit spectator ;*”\*

in other words, that no description of a thing can equal the sight of it. Descriptions ever so accurate and minute want something of the actuality of the object described, be it whatever it may. Words, when well chosen, may go near the reality, but do not, cannot, communicate to their hearers its exact portraiture. Fully impressed with the truth of this assertion, the London and Middlesex Archæologi-

\* Hor. A. P. 180, 181, 182.

cal Society is not simply content to describe to its members the interesting remains of which our city and county are full, but, wherever practicable, desires to introduce them to the localities themselves, where, face to face with objects, the supremacy of whose loveliness the tongue is feeble to depict, they may each for himself enter into their peculiar beauties and breathe their native inspiration. Accordingly we hold our meeting this evening in Crosby Hall, and take advantage of our good fortune to study the various points of interest connected with the scene before us—the remains of a noble edifice, than which our city contains few, if any, more deserving of notice both for its architectural excellence and its eventful history.

Crosby Hall, as it is now called, formed part of a very extensive and magnificent mansion erected somewhere about the year 1470, by Sir John Crosbie, a member of the Company of Grocers, and a woolstapler. Sir John was the beau-ideal of a merchant of the olden time—just the one who, in conjunction with others like himself, has raised this great city to the place which it now occupies as the metropolis of the world—a man of unimpeachable integrity and unswerving honour, joined to indefatigable industry and clear-sighted acumen. The year of his birth we know not, and the name of his birth-place is involved in similar obscurity. It has indeed been said that the builder of Crosby Place raised himself to power and opulence by his own good conduct and thoughtful sagacity. If so, the more praise, I presume, is due to him. The upright old chronicler Stowe has even condescended, though he dissents from it, to notice a report that our knight was a foundling! He says, “I hold it a fable saide of him to be named *Crosbie*, of being found by a crosse, for I have read of other to have the name of Crosbie before him, namely, in the yeere 1406, the 7th of Henry IVth, the sayde king gave to his servant John Crosbie the wardship of Joane, daughter and sole heyre to John Jordaine, fishmonger, and this Crosbie might be the father or grandfather to Sir John Crosbie.”\* What Stowe suggests is most probably the truth; for the dates and circumstances may fairly be held to unite in the John Crosbie to whom was given the wardship of Joane Jordaine, and him of the same name who was the father of the builder of this renowned hall.

\* *Survey*, 4to. 1603, p. 174.

It must not, however, be supposed that all our knowledge of the worthy merchant is of so meagre a character as that regarding his birth and parentage. By no means is this the case. In the troublous year 1470 he was elected one of the Sheriffs of London, having previously become a member of the Grocers' Company, and an Alderman. During his shrievalty, he accompanied the Mayor, Aldermen, and a large company of citizens on the 21st May, 1471, to meet King Edward IV. between Shoreditch and Islington on that monarch's entrance into London, on which occasion he had the honour of receiving the order of knighthood. I need not enter into the various diplomatic employments which he held through the favour of his Sovereign, by whom his sterling character was duly appreciated. But I must not omit to say that Sir John was Mayor of the staple of Calais, a representative in Parliament of the city of London in the year 1461, and warden of his Company. The records show, however, that in one point at least the parallel fails between him and Sir Richard Whittington—he never was Lord Mayor.

Sir John Crosbie was gathered to his fathers in the year 1475. He had been twice married, and his second wife survived him. He was buried in the Chapel of the Holy Ghost, within the neighbouring Church of St. Helen's, which at that time was the conventual church of a Benedictine priory, and the church of the parish in which we have now met. "A fayre monument," as Stowe says, "of him and his ladye is raised there." An intelligent writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1832, has furnished us with a notice of a very curious peculiarity in this tomb. "Sir John," he writes, "is said to have been a zealous Yorkist, and it is very remarkable that his effigy does not wear the Lancastrian badge, the collar of SS, a very general distinction for persons of gentility or noble blood, but a collar composed of roses and suns alternately disposed, the white rose and the sun being the badge adopted by Edward IV. after the ominous parhelion which appeared in the heavens on the day of the victory at Mortimer's Cross."\*

Of his two wives the first was named Anneys or Agnes,

\* Other examples of this the Yorkist collar occur at St. Alban's, Arundel, Little Easton, Broxbourne, &c.

and, according to an inscription formerly existing on the tomb just alluded to, died in 1466. By her he had several children, five of whom were called Thomas, Richard, John, Margaret and Joan, but none appear to have survived him. The name of his second wife was Anne, daughter of William Chedworth, but by her it is probable that he left no issue. His will, dated March 6, 1471, is a most curious, valuable, and interesting document, a brief abstract of which will not, I hope, be condemned as a needless digression.

First, he bequeathes and recommends his soul to Almighty God, his Maker and Redeemer, and to the most glorious Virgin His Mother, our Lady St. Mary, and to the blessed College of His Saints, and his body to be buried in the Chapel of the Holy Ghost, within the parish church of St. Helen, within Bishopsgate of London, in the same place whereas the body of Anneys his late wife was buried, in case it fortun'd him to decease within the realm of England. He then particularises the ornaments and general character of his tomb, and bequeathes various sums to the prioress and nuns of the house of St. Helen, and the parish priest of the parish church of St. Helen to do Placcbo, Dirge, and Masse of Requiem, for his soul, and that of Anneys his late wife, and for the souls of all his children passed to God, and for all Christian souls. For a similar purpose he bequeathes 40s. to the following:—The prior and convent of the house of Friars Augustines within the city of London, now called Austin Friars, in Broad Street; the wardens and convent of the house of Friars Minores within Newgate, now Christ's Hospital; the prior and convent of the house of Friars Preachers within Ludgate; the prior and convent of the house of the Friars of Carmel in Fleet Street; and the prior and convent of the house of the Crowched Friars near the Tower. Besides these bequests, he gives various sums to St. Mary Spittle without Bishopsgate; to the distract people in the Hospital of Bedlam; to St. Thomas Spittle in Southwark; to Elsing Spittle within Cripplegate, now Sion College; to St. Bartholomew Spittle in Smithfield; to the abbess and convent of the house of the Minoresses without Aldgate, where his cousin Dame Sybil Christmas was a nun professed; to the aforesaid lady forty pounds; to the prioress and convent of the house of Holy-

well beside Shoreditch; and the prioress and convent of Stratford-le-Bow. Besides this, he gives to the prior and convent of the Charterhouse, and to the abbess, father, brethren, and sisters of the monastery of Sion, as well as to various ecclesiastics by name, various sums for religious purposes. He gives sums of 40 shillings each to the prisoners in Newgate, Ludgate, King's Bench, and the Marshalsea; to the old work of the cathedral church of St. Paul; for a priest to pray for his soul in his parish church of St. Helen; and for his obit to be holden yearly during forty years in the said church; for the repairs of Bishopsgate and the walls adjoining, 100*l.*; for a new tower of stone to be erected at the south end of London Bridge, 100*l.*; for the repairs of Rochester Bridge, 10*l.*; and to a host of lay relations, friends, and servants, various sums. I must not omit to add that he gives to Anne his wife, in the name of dower and share, two thousand pounds in money, and all her array, girdles, brooches, beads, and rings, to her own proper body, for her own proper wearing, pertaining; and also all his household, whole as it is; all his plate of gold and silver gilt, and parcel gilt, and of silver white, and all his armours "as well curaces, bregandynes, and jakks," and all his wearing clothes and all other gear to his own proper person pertaining, excepted. He also leaves her the house of Crosby Place for the residue of her life, or during the nonage of her child if she were pregnant at the time of his decease; and, on ultimate failure of issue, to his executors, who should sell the same, and dispose of it for the benefit of his soul and his wife's, as before directed. The rest of this very voluminous document is occupied with directions as to the disposition of his manor of Haneworth, &c.; and, in default of issue, he wills the entire residue of the proceeds to the Grocers' Company to dispose for his soul, viz.: "in doing of masses; in making or buying of books, chaleyces, and other apparelment of the church, and to be given unto poor churches where need shall require; in relieving of poor prisoners, and getting some of them out of prison; in marriage of poor maidens of good name and fame, to each of them xls. at least; in amending of broken bridges, and of foul, noyous, and perilous high weies, and in

other deeds of alms, charity, and pity." So universal was the beneficence and so unbounded the wealth of this great citizen of London, the good founder of Crosby Place. His will was proved in the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury, 6th February, 1475.

After this sketch of the life of its first master, we will now address ourselves more particularly to a concise history of the edifice itself, beginning with its foundation, in or about 1470, and continuing our notices to the present time: and we will then take an architectural survey of that portion of it which yet remains.

To those of my audience who are unacquainted with the history of this magnificent mansion, I feel certain that a mere list of its various tenants and others connected with it will be perfectly amazing from its interest and richness. Under the gorgeous roof beneath which we are now assembled, some, not only of our monarchs and the highest-born of our countrymen, but of the personages dearest to England's heart, have resided and called the place their home. And words have been spoken here, both in grief and in gladness, whose echoes no lapse of time shall avail to still.

It was in the year 1466, the 6th of Edward IV., that " Dame Alice Ashfelde, Pryoress of the house or convent of St. Helene," demised to John Crosbie certain lands and tenements adjoining, south-west of the priory precinct, for a term of ninety-nine years, at a rent of 11*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* per annum. The original deed describes the ground with considerable minuteness, as having a frontage along the " Kinges Strete," or " Bisshoppesgate Strete," of about a hundred and ten feet, and as running eastward fifty-eight feet and a half. The outline of the property to the east and south must have been extremely irregular, and cannot at the present time be ascertained with certainty. Nine years elapsed between the commencement of this lease and the death of Sir John Crosbie; and in that period the house was erected. The earliest notice of it which I have seen is that of Stowe, who says that " it was built of stone and timber, very large and beautiful, and the highest at that time in London." Scarcely was it completed, however, before its munificent owner died. Four or five years at the utmost were all,

during which he could have enjoyed the concentration of beauties which his good taste and his wealth had been the means of creating.

How long his widow resided here after his decease I know not, or the circumstances of her removal. In 1483, however, eight years subsequent to his death, we find in possession no less a person than Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard III. He was probably a tenant under Sir John Crosbie's executors. After arriving in London on the 4th of May, 1483, "the sayd Duke," says Fabyan, "caused the Kyng to be remoued vnto the Tower, and his broder with hym, \* \* \* and the Duke lodgid hymselfe in Crosbyes Place, in Bysshoppis gate Strete."\* We learn also from Holinshed that "by little and little all folke withdrew from the Tower, and drew unto Crosbies in Bishops gates Street, where the Protector kept his houshold. The Protector had the resort; the King in maner desolate."† Here, according to tradition, the crown was offered him by the mayor and citizens on the 25th of June, 1483. On the 27th he was proclaimed; and on the following day he left Crosby Place for his palace of Westminster.

From the circumstance of Richard's residence, this mansion derives one of its special attractions. Not simply, however, from the fact itself, but from the notice which it has on this account received from one, who has only to make a place the scene of his matchless impersonations in order to confer on it an immortality of interest. In this manner one greater than Richard Plantagenet has done that for Crosby Place, which the mere fact that it was the home of a King would not of itself impart. Thrice in his play of Richard the Third our own Shakspeare has referred to it by name, and has made the transactions which took place under this roof integral parts of his imperishable drama. In the marvellous scene, after a perusal of which we may ask ourselves, as Richard did,

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?

Was ever woman in this humour won?

we have the duke, reconciled at length to the Lady Anne, thus addressing her:—

\* Fabyan, edit. Ellis, 1811, p. 668.

† Holinshed, edit. 1587, vol. iii. p. 721.

If thy poor devoted servant may  
But beg one favour at thy gracious hand,  
Thou dost confirm his happiness for ever.

*Anne.*—What is it?

*Glo.*—That it may please you leave these sad designs  
To him that hath more cause to be a mourner,  
And presently repair to Crosby Place :  
Where—after I have solemnly interred,  
At Chertsey monastery, this noble king,  
And wet his grave with my repentant tears,—  
I will with all expedient duty see you.\*

The reunion was here (we will not censure the slight anachronism on the poet's part), and it led to Gloucester's marriage with the lady whose vituperation of him had been so unmeasured.

In another scene, where he commissions his assassins to murder Clarence, he adds,

When you have done, repair to Crosby Place.†

And again, in the scene with Buckingham and Catesby, where Gloucester sends the latter to sound Hastings with reference to his designs upon the crown, he says at parting,

Shall we hear from you, Catesby, ere we sleep?

*Catesby.*—You shall, my lord.

*Glo.*—At Crosby Place, there shall you find us both.

\* \* \* \* \*

Come, let us sup betimes; that afterwards

We may digest our complots in some form.‡

Here the supper was eaten, and the complots were digested!

Crosby Place, Shakspeare, and Richard, are thus identified. It has been said that "the reason why this building received the attention which it has from Shakspeare was from some association existing in his own mind." Doubtless: but the writer considers that "it is not too much to suppose that he had been admitted in the humble guise of a player, to entertain the guests assembled in the banqueting-hall," and had thus seen and admired its beauties. I cannot regard this as anything else but a most gratuitous fancy. We are indebted to Mr. Hunter, in his interesting *Illustrations of the Life, Studies, and Writings of Shakspeare*,

\* Act I. scene 2.

† Act I. scene 3.

‡ Act III. scene 1.



for the knowledge of the fact that, by an assessment of the date of October 1, 1598, the 40th of Elizabeth, Shakspeare is proved to have been an inhabitant of the parish of St. Helen's. He is assessed in the sum of *5l. 13s. 4d.*, not an inconsiderable sum in those days. Distinguished by the special favour of Queen Elizabeth and her successor, and the personal friend of such men as Southampton, Pembroke, and Montgomery, the "star of poets" was often, I would hope, a welcome visitor at Crosby Place, and looked up at those graceful timbers and that elegant oriel from an honoured seat at the high table. The lady who tenanted the house during some of the best known years of Shakspeare's life was the Dowager Countess of Pembroke, "Sydney's sister, Pembroke's mother," immortalised by rare Ben Jonson: and it is not too much to say that "gentle" Will found himself here not unfrequently, and ever as a caressed and honoured guest. We will suppose, therefore, and the supposition is a much pleasanter one than that quoted above, that, as locality is powerful in its effects on a poet's mind, we may owe to this, or the reminiscences connected with it—the friends whose society was here enjoyed, and the virtues and graces which were here witnessed—outpourings such as the following, which no true Englishman can read without burning heart and faltering tongue:—

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,  
 This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
 This other Eden, demi-paradise;  
 This fortress, built by nature for herself,  
 Against infection, and the hand of war;  
 This happy breed of men, this little world,  
 This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
 This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,  
 This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land;  
 England, bound in with the triumphant sea,  
 Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege  
 Of watery Neptune.\*  
 This England never did, nor never shall,  
 Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,  
 But when it first did help to wound itself.

\* King Richard II. Act II. scene 1.

Come the three corners of the world in arms,  
 And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,  
 If England to itself do rest but true!\*

This, I am aware, is a digression; but you have already accorded to me your forgiveness of it. We will now proceed to the immediate subject of our review.

King Richard III. left Crosby Place for Westminster on the 27th of June, 1483. Who first occupied the house when he vacated it for a throne I know not; but in 1501 Sir Bartholomew Reed was its tenant, to whom it was assigned by the representative of Sir John Crosbie's surviving executor. Here it was that he spent his mayoralty in 1502, which was one of the most brilliant on record. It is said that he entertained the Princess Katharine of Arragon two days before her marriage with the youthful Arthur, the eldest son of Henry VII. He also received here the Ambassadors of Maximilian, Emperor of Germany, when they came on a visit of condolence upon the death of that prince.

Reed was succeeded by another city magnate, Sir John Best, Alderman of London, and Lord Mayor in 1516.

And now another name is to be given as an owner of this hall, sufficient of itself to invest the place with an undying interest. Between the date last mentioned and 1523, the house passed by purchase from Sir John Best to Sir Thomas More, Under Treasurer of England, and afterwards the Lord High Chancellor. During several of those years this magnificent apartment was the scene, doubtless, of many of those homely but profoundly sagacious jests, of those calm and philosophical conversations, and of that deeply reverential piety, which made his society the delight of all who were admitted to it, and the talk and admiration of continental Europe. I have not time, nor do you need me, to quote from Erasmus, Cochlæus, and others, their estimate of his unequalled excellence, and the fulness of affectionate regret with which they recapitulated his noble traits, when the brutal hand of a sacrilegious tyrant had done its worst to remove their loveliness from the world.

On the 20th of January, 1523, Sir Thomas sold his interest in

\* King John, Act V. scene 5.

what is described in the deed as the "great tenement called Crosbie's Place" to his friend Antonio Bonvisi, a merchant of Lucca. This was the gentleman to whom, twelve years afterwards, he wrote with a piece of charcoal from his prison in the Tower the affecting letter published in Roper's Life of his great father-in-law. He continued to reside here until 1547.

In the meanwhile, however, the freehold changed hands. It was given up to the Crown, according to Howell, on the 25th of November, the 30th of Henry VIII., 1538, by what was called "a free and voluntary surrender," though in what the freedom and voluntariness consisted we are not informed. It was a characteristic of the times that the weak were pillaged, while the strong were respected. The leases, therefore, which had been granted by the dissolved monasteries to powerful laymen were in general confirmed to them, as it would not have done to alienate the nobility and gentry from the new order of things attempted to be established. Such was the case in the present instance. The prioress of St. Helen's was despoiled of her freehold, but the merchant Bonvisi was confirmed in his lease!

The freehold itself was afterwards sold to him by the king; for on the 28th of August, 1542, Sir Edward Northe, Knt., treasurer, had received of the said Antonio 207*l.* 18*s.* 4*d.* sterling for sundry edifices and lands, &c., including "one tenement or messuage called Crosbow's Place, lying and being in the parish of St. Ellen's in London;" and "for divers other houses, messuages, &c., in the parish of St. Ellen, and the parish of St. Mary Axe, in London, late parcel of the possessions of the said late priory of St. Ellen's." In the deed of conveyance the premises are described, a fact which makes the importance of the document considerable. It mentions first the great messuage or tenement commonly called Crosbie Place, together with a certain venell or lane from the east of the said tenement to the corner of the south end of a little lane, going in a northern direction to the Priory Close. It then enumerates nine messuages adjoining and situate in the parish of St. Helen's, belonging to the same property, and formerly held of the priory by Sir John Crosbie.

On the 1st of April, 1547, Antonio Bonvisi leased the house to

William Rooper and William Rastell, the former the husband of Margaret daughter of Sir Thomas More, and the author of the well-known memoir of his great relative, portions of which may rank among the most exquisite compositions in our language; the latter probably Sir Thomas's printer, and a near connection of John Rastell, his brother-in-law, a well-known writer of moralities. All three soon after left England, for causes which it is not difficult to divine, and "went and departed into the parts beyond sea, without licence, and against the force, form, and effect of a statute and certain proclamation in that behalf made, published, and proclaimed." Hereupon their estates became forfeited, and were granted by the king, in 1550, to Sir Thomas Darcy, Lord Darcy. In the first year of his successor the absentees returned, and for "divers good causes and considerations" were restored by Lord Darcy to their former estates.

From Bonvisi the property descended, almost immediately after he had again obtained possession of it, to Peter Crowle, and from him to Germaine Cyoll, who was named in Bonvisi's will as second in succession after Crowle, and Cyclicie his wife, who was the daughter of Sir John Gresham, Knight, and cousin of Sir Thomas Gresham, the founder of the Royal Exchange, whose house was in Bishopsgate Street, opposite to Crosby Place. Cyoll entered upon his residence in 1560, and continued here till 1566. On the 15th of May in that year the house was purchased for 1,500*l.* by William Bonde, alderman of London. During his occupation it underwent considerable repair and received some additions. He is said to have increased the height of the house by building a turret on the roof. His improvements, however, were introduced into those portions of the edifice which have long since been swept away.

On the death of Bonde, in 1576, Crosby Place descended to his sons, William, Nicholas, and Martyn; and William and his mother continued, it is said, to reside here. Some years subsequent to this it was appropriated to the reception of various foreign ambassadors. Among these are mentioned Henry Ramelius, Chancellor of Denmark, and ambassador from Frederick the Second, King of Denmark, to Queen Elizabeth. And from an

entry in the register of St. Helen's, united to the testimony of Stowe, we learn that a French ambassador was lodged here, whose secretary, Nicholas Fylio, was buried in St. Helen's, September 23, 1592.

From William and Martyn, the sons of Alderman Bonde, Crosby Place was purchased in 1594 by Sir John Spencer, Knt., for 2,560*l.* According to Stowe he made "great reparation." He kept his mayoralty here in 1594, and among the gaieties of the year was the performance of a masque by the gentlemen students of Gray's Inn and the Temple, for the special delectation and in the august presence of their liege lady Queen Elizabeth. What the masque was, or how her Majesty testified her royal pleasure at the same, I am sorry that I have no means of informing you.

During his term of occupation Sir John Spencer added considerably to the premises, especially by the erection of a "most large warehouse builded neare thereunto." At the same period various eminent strangers "with their retinues, which were very splendid, were there harboured." Among these, there was, in 1603, M. de Rosney, Great Treasurer of France, more commonly known as the Duc de Sully. It is also stated to have been the temporary residence of Henry Frederick, youngest son of William Prince of Orange, and of some Ambassadors from Holland.

On the death of Sir John, in 1609, the house descended to the Right Hon. Sir William Compton, Knt., Lord Compton, and afterwards Earl of Northampton, who had married Elizabeth, daughter and sole heiress of the deceased. Whether he resided here is doubtful, as in a lease made in the year 1615, in which the place is let for the term of twenty-one years to William Russell at a rent of 200*l.* per annum, it is stated that the "capital messuage or mansion-house, called Crosby House," was "then or late in the tenure of the dowager Countess of Pembroke," the lady to whom I have already referred.

From Lord Northampton, who died June 14, 1630, Crosby Place descended to his son Spencer, who appears to have resided here for a brief period. The mansion was soon destined to witness a gloomy change from the scenes which it had hitherto presented.

Evil days were coming upon the land, and an execrable faction threw its baleful shade upon many a home where hitherto little or no shade had fallen. The gallant owner of that which has received us this evening was one of the stoutest supporters of the royal cause, and one of the first to fall in defence of his sovereign. He died the death of a hero at Hopton Heath, March 19, 1642. Two years before this, in June 1640, the house was leased to Sir John Langham, Knt. and sheriff in 1642, for ninety-nine years. During some years of his tenancy (though we may charitably hope without his concurrence) Crosby Place, like many another ancient house, became not the receiver of the monarch for its honoured guest, but the jail of that monarch's loyal servants. Under the term of *Malignants*, among whom in the language of the day were placed all who continued steadfast to the government of their country in Church and State, many eminent men among the clergy and laity found in the rooms of this house a prison and a prison's severities.\* At length, after the murder of the king, and the complete subversion of the ancient régime, when no further fears were entertained that loyalty would get the better of treason, Crosby Place was relieved of the degrading use to which it had been applied. It was soon, however, to meet with another hardly less incongruous.

Sir Stephen, the son of Sir John Langham, succeeded his father in his tenancy previous to the year 1674. In 1672, the Great Hall, whose history sinks lower and lower, was converted into a Presbyterian meeting-house. Though spared by the Fire of London, which, however, extended its ravages to the immediate neighbourhood, the house suffered a similar catastrophe in or about the year 1676. The greater portion was destroyed by an accidental fire, and from that period it ceased to be a mansion. What remains, therefore, to be spoken refers to the Great Hall and two adjoining chambers. To complete the enumeration of the owners, it should be stated that the fee-simple remained in the hands of the Northampton family till 1678, when it passed to the Cranfields, and with them till 1692, when it was sold to the Freemans, with whom it still remains. The lease of the pre-

\* See Journal of Commons, 1642, vol. ii. pp. 828, 894, &c. &c.

mises passed from Sir Stephen Langham to William Freeman, and under him first to Granado Chester, a grocer, and subsequently to Thomas Goodinge: and in 1677 the houses called Crosby Square were erected upon the site of those destroyed by the fire previously mentioned.

In 1678 the Great Hall was occupied in the following manner:—The ground floor was a warehouse in the occupation of Chester. On a level with the Minstrels' Gallery a floor was inserted, on which assembled the Presbyterian congregation already noticed. A frightful staircase, ascending on the outside of the building, led to this floor, through an entrance made in the second story of the oriel! Either at the same time or shortly afterwards a second floor was added just below the springing of the roof, and was probably used for the reception of foreign products. For at this period the two rooms just referred to as escaping the fire, called the Withdrawing Room and Throne Room above it, were held, at 160*l.* per annum, by the “Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies” for warehousing and other purposes.

The Presbyterian congregation occupied their portion of the Hall till 1769, when it was taken by a Dissenting minister named James Relly, who was said to see visions, and upon the strength of these founded a sect called Rellyans, or Rellites, or Rellyanists, or Rellyan Universalists. This *capriccio* ended with the life of the inventor, which terminated in 1778. Soon after the departure of the last Dissenting congregation the entire fabric was taken on lease under the Freemans by Messrs. Holmes and Hall, packers; and, in order to adapt it to the requirements of their business, many horrible mutilations were perpetrated. In this state it continued till the year 1831, when, on the expiration of those gentlemen's term, the premises were actually advertised to be let on a building lease,—in other words, to be pulled down and their place to be supplied by a new structure.

This was the overflowing drop in the bitter cup: and it is our happiness to record the gratifying fact that from that hour the fortunes of the spot have taken a different direction. Even, however, during the last hundred years of its varied history it was not forgotten by the historian, the antiquary, and the artist, but

was oftentimes reverently visited, and its degradation was feelingly deplored. At length the time arrived when some effort was to be made for its restoration and future safeguard. A few gentlemen, principally of the neighbouring families, met together and determined to appeal to the public in behalf of a structure, which, as they properly considered, was a national treasure, and possessed an imperishable interest for the country at large. A meeting was subsequently held at the London Tavern, on Tuesday the 8th of May, 1831, the Alderman of the ward in the chair, and the work of careful and judicious restoration was shortly afterwards commenced. "On the eve of demolition," says Mr. Kempe,\* "threatened on all sides, like many other venerable foundations, to be swept away by the spring-tide of reformation and improvement, or at least of the devastating principle so called, Crosby Hall has been fortunate enough to find in an intelligent literary lady [Miss Hackett], its near neighbour, and in various other public-spirited individuals, a timely and energetic protection." The first stone of the new works was laid June 27, 1836, and the Hall was re-opened, as a literary and scientific institution, July 27, 1842.

On the history of Crosby Place I have but one word more to say. It is now the honoured centre of the Metropolitan Evening Classes; and in this magnificent apartment the weekly lectures during term are delivered by various professional and other gentlemen, among whom I am happy to include myself. The audience, though not so learned a one as that which I have now the honour to address, is nevertheless a very intelligent and truly interesting assemblage; and I feel certain that I shall gratify you by the information that the institution is doing well, and likely, we hope, to do better.

I have occupied so much of your time with its history, that I must curtail the architectural description of the edifice to a greater extent than I could have wished. That, however, is a matter of less importance, as many of you will be able to detect at a glance the grand features of the style, and the accompanying engravings will assist others. The portions of the house which

\* Gentleman's Magazine, June, 1832, p. 507.



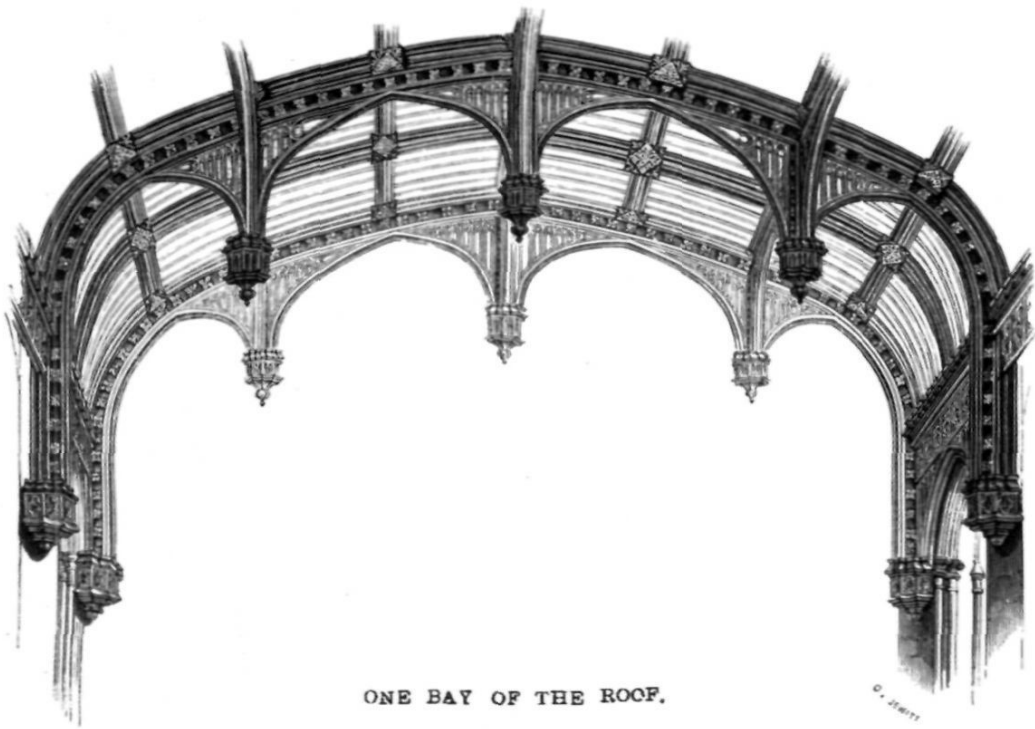
remain to the present day are, you will recollect, the Great Hall and a building of two stories, situate at right angles to it on the north-west corner, and thus forming with it two sides of a quadrangle, together with a number of vaults beneath these structures and some of the adjacent houses which now occupy the site of the original mansion. Every other part of that magnificent whole is gone; and I grieve to be obliged to add that, even in the memory of man, some unnecessary injury has been inflicted on the Throne Room and Council Room, by which names the apartments just referred to as adjoining the Hall are traditionally known. An oriel, in many respects similar to that in the Great Hall, has been removed to a house in Buckinghamshire; while the ceilings of both rooms have shared a similar fate, probably from their excellence and artistic beauty, and at the present moment constitute the adornments of private houses, and, in one instance, that of a gentleman's chapel in his parish church. Although such an use can by no means be considered a desecration, it is equally certain that Crosby Place has not suffered the less from so ruthless a misappropriation and so ill-directed a zeal.

It is conjectured that the entire house was composed of two quadrangles separated by the Great Hall.\* This noble apartment is a parallelogram of 55 feet, or, with the Minstrels' Gallery, of 67 feet 4 inches, by 27 feet 6 inches; its height to the crown of the ceiling is 40 feet. It derives an increase of size from a large oriel, or bay window, formed by three whole and two half windows, on its western side. In addition to this oriel there are on the same western side, the only one visible from the exterior, a series of six admirably constructed windows, the elevation above them being terminated by a cornice and parapet. These windows are of the kind usually observable in domestic

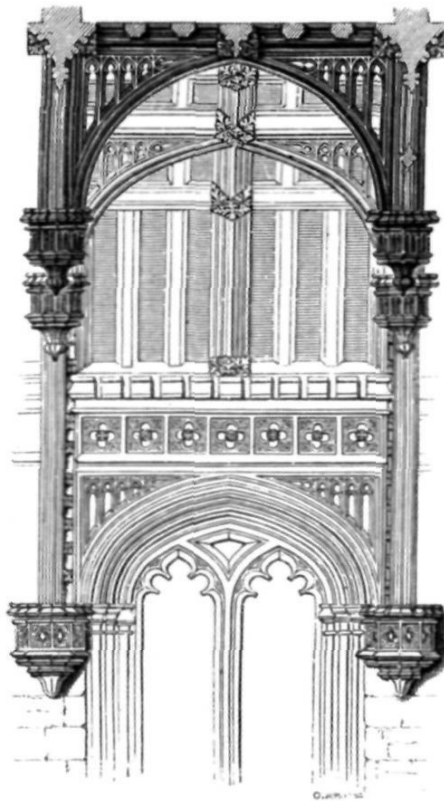
\* I refer those of my readers who desire to investigate this and other points connected with the original appearance of the edifice to *Londina Illustrata*, Malcolm's *Londinium Redivivum*, and the excellent manuals of Messrs. Carlos, Blackburn, and Hammon, whose valuable assistance I desire to acknowledge. The space at my command restricts me to the perhaps more useful task of describing those parts of the mansion which are still in existence.

edifices of the fifteenth century, are furnished with a label returned square, and divided by a central mullion into two lights each. The arrangement of the two southernmost windows, which admit light into the Minstrels' Gallery, differs from that of the rest, in being divided by a mullion only. On the east side of the hall are eight windows, uniform with those just described, two of them taking the place which the oriel occupies on the opposite side. The two northernmost on both sides, being over the dais, are shorter than the others. The north and south ends of the hall are concealed on the outside by buildings, the former by the library and committee rooms recently erected. Externally, the semi-octangular oriel has on each face lights of a character similar to the other windows, but continued downwards as far as the level of the plinth. The label also of the oriel is of a similar description to that which surmounts the other windows. Small buttresses occupy the angles, the faces of which are panelled. On account of the height, each window in the oriel is divided by transoms into three stories. The transoms are ornamented with miniature battlements, and the panelling of the buttresses is repeated at every stage.

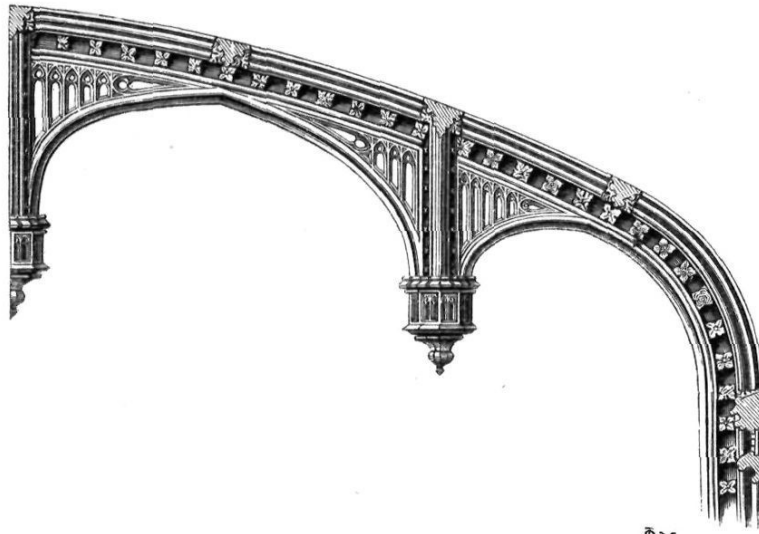
Let us now proceed to the interior. Immediately on entering, the eye is irresistibly drawn upwards by one of the most glorious timber roofs which England possesses. (See the engravings.) A cross section of this matchless piece of carpentry presents a flattened arch; the extreme length being divided into eight bays by large ribs, which rise from the pier of each window, and rest at either extremity on a richly-moulded octagonal corbel. Each of these ribs includes within its span from side to side four smaller arches, flattened in a manner similar to the arch which contains them, but distorted in order to suit its curvature. Nothing can be more graceful than these smaller arches, thus slightly differing in form, in order to accommodate themselves to the great one in which they are placed, while each drops upon octagonal pendants, very similar to the corbels which support the main ribs. From each of these pendants an arch springs longitudinally to another pendant below the next rib; so that every pendant is the centre of four arches, one on each side breadthwise, and one on each



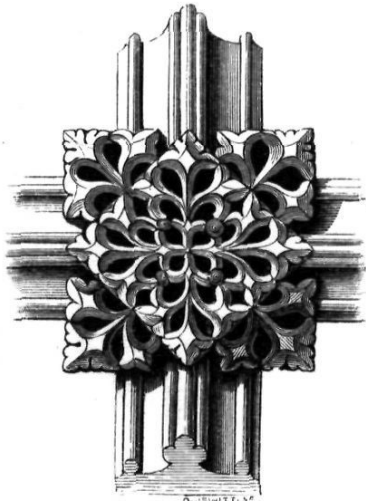
ONE BAY OF THE ROOF.



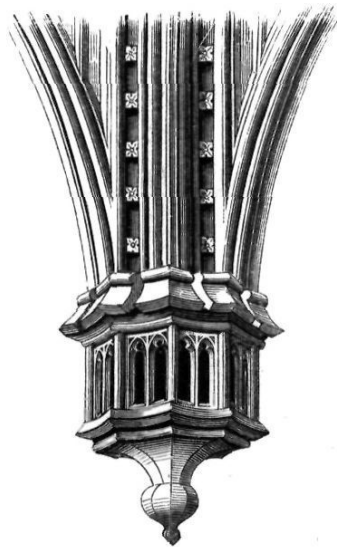
LONGITUDINAL SECTION OF ONE BAY.  
ROOF OF THE GREAT HALL.



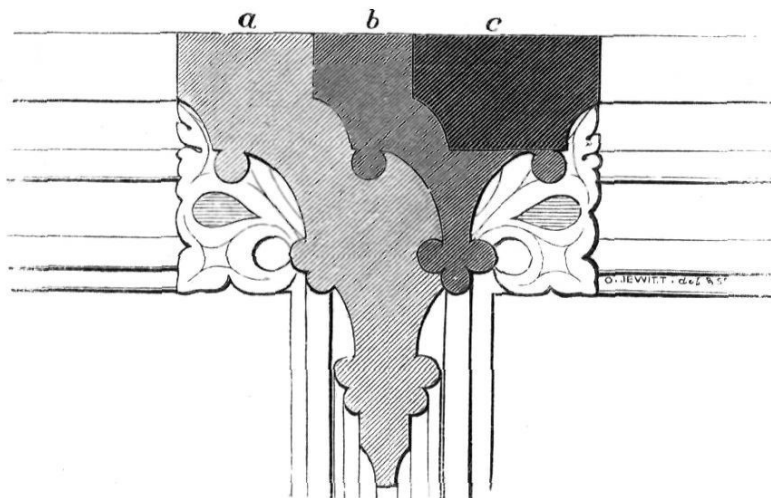
HALF OF ONE OF THE PRINCIPALS.



BOSS.



PENDANT.



SECTION OF PRINCIPAL, (a), PURLINS, (b), AND RAFTERS, (c).  
DETAILS OF THE ROOF OF THE GREAT HALL.

side lengthwise. From end to end of the Hall, therefore, there are three parallel lines of pendants, and four parallel lines of arches. The spandrels of these hanging arches are filled with delicate perpendicular open tracery. On either side-wall, along the line from which the ceiling ascends, there is a series of panels ornamented with quatrefoils. The vault of the roof is covered with panels, ornamented with richly-moulded longitudinal and cross ribs which divide the space between each of the arches into four equal compartments; and these mouldings, together with the main ribs themselves, are decorated with a profusion of flowers and knots of foliage. In the centre of the fourth bay from the south is an hexagonal louvre, or lantern, the use of which in ancient houses was, I scarcely need add, to allow of the escape of the smoke from the fire, which was made against the reredos in the middle of the floor below. Whether the present one was ever used for this purpose is doubtful; as there existed a *fireplace at the north end of the Hall, the opening of which measured 7 feet 8 inches by 5 feet 6 inches*, independent of its exterior mouldings, and another is still visible on the east side. It should be added that the present differs from the generality of our timber roofs by being an inner one, and covered by another on the outside. Instead of this, the usual plan was to exhibit the actual timbers of which the external roof was composed, to which were applied ornaments and other additions, in agreement with the taste or skill of the constructor.

It has been supposed by some that the roof, as we now see it, is not complete, but that it has suffered mutilation and curtailment at one if not both ends. The restoration demonstrated that such was not the fact, from the conclusive circumstance that the extreme trusses were only half the thickness of the others, and were furnished with mouldings on the inner side only. I am indebted to Mr. Carlos for this information, which completely sets the question at rest.

The walls below the windows are perfectly plain, and composed of rubble plastered over. They were intended to be covered with tapestry.

No original entrance into the Hall now remains, except a flat-

arched doorway communicating with the Council Chamber. The main entrance was no doubt under the Minstrels' Gallery at the south end; but this spot has long formed the passage to Crosby Square, and all vestiges of its ancient appearance have ceased to exist.

The oriel, which stands on the west side of the Hall, and towards its northern extremity, is one of the finest specimens now remaining. (See vignette, p. 35.) It rises to the entire height of the room, and is 10 feet 10 inches in width, and 8 feet 5 inches in depth from the inner line of the wall beyond which it projects. It is formed by five sides of an octagon, at the angles of which are clustered shafts which rise from octagonal plinths. From the capitals of these delicate shafts spring ribs, which diverge and form the groining of a richly-ornamented stone ceiling. At the numerous points where the ramifications intersect each other are bosses of foliage, that in the centre larger than any of the rest, and bearing in high relief the crest of Sir John Crosbie—a ram trippant argent, armed and hooped or. I scarcely need add that the ancient glass with which the oriel was furnished, and which no doubt was magnificent, has entirely perished.

I have nothing to communicate with regard to the interiors of the Council Chamber and Throne Room over it, which, you will recollect, constitute, together with the Hall and some vaults to be noticed presently, the sole remaining portions of the original structure. An external doorway, small and flat-arched, occupies the angle between the Hall and Council Chamber. Before the late restorations the height of this building was divided into three stories, but the previous division into two floors is again introduced. They are noble rooms; but the appearance which they now present is entirely the effect of modern renovation.

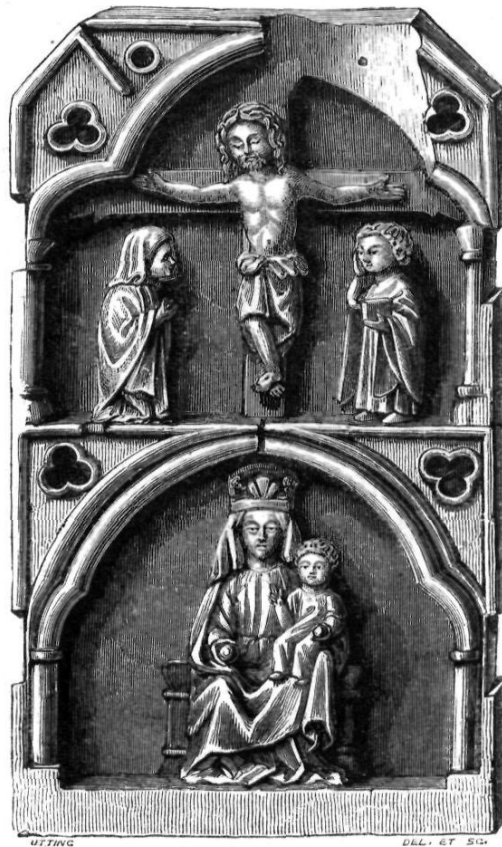
There only remain to be described the numerous vaults just referred to, which are chiefly possessed of interest as marking the site of a portion at least of the original edifice. They extend over a large surface, and are used as cellars by the occupiers of several of the neighbouring houses. For the most part they are ceiled with elliptical brick arches plastered over. One however, 35 feet by 16, situated at the south-west of the Great Hall, and to which are attached the remains of a staircase that led to the apartments

above, is of a richer character. It formed the substructure of a building, which, together with the Hall and the Council Chamber, formed three sides of one of the quadrangles of which the house was composed, and differs from the others by being vaulted in chalk with ribs of stone. And a conjecture has been advanced, from its higher degree of ornamentation, that the building which surmounted it was the domestic chapel.

Our survey of this noble mansion—the first of a series in illustration of old London and Middlesex domestic edifices—is now as complete as the space at my disposal will allow. We have traced its history from the ancestral days of its worshipful founder, through times of wealth, hospitality, and splendour, as well as of degradation and reckless injury, to its present period of comparative restoration. We have glanced at the noble array, solemnly passing in imagination before us, of worthies who successively owned or tenanted the place. And we have technically examined such of its architectural glories as time and vandalism have been prevailed upon to spare. You will not, I trust, have considered the time wasted which has been devoted to such an object. For in the midst of destruction so sweeping and wholesale, we may indeed congratulate ourselves on this happy conservation of the finest parts of a building associated in such close intimacy with what we love best in secular literature, and admire most in constructive art. We may indeed be thankful that, among all the changes so conspicuous around us, we have yet accorded to us the possession of a scene which can recal such memories as those in which we have been luxuriating, and which can make us live in spirit with so many of the great and good who have passed away from the eye of sense. An edifice well deserves our reverence and regard, whose venerable walls, solemn chambers, and diversified history can reveal beauties, suggest associations, and elicit remembrances, at once so fair, so national, and so grandly great.

---

[The Council have the pleasure of very thankfully acknowledging the liberality of their noble President, Lord Londesborough, in presenting the engravings which accompany the foregoing Paper, as well as that which occupies the following page.]



Central portion, actual size, of an Ivory Triptych, of the XIVth Century, found in Haydon Square, Minorities, on the site of the Abbey of the Nuns Minoresses, 12th Sept. 1853.

In the possession of the Rev. Thomas Hugo.