DURHAM HOUSE AND THE ADELPHI.

BY

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WE meet in what is essentially an eighteenth century room, full of associations with the distinguished men and women of the second half of that, and the whole of the nineteenth century.

The great interest of the Adelphi to the London Antiquary consists in the fact that its site is almost exactly conterminous with that of Durham House, the history of which dates back at least to the thirteenth century. The earliest recorded incident in this history is one of very great interest. In the year 1238, Otho, the Papal Legate, was lodging at Durham House when he summoned the English Bishops to consider what steps should be taken respecting the churches and schools of Oxford, which he had laid under an interdict on account of the riotous conduct of the scholars, who, when the Legate was living at Oseney, killed his brother and the clerk of his kitchen in a serious affray. The Bishops interceded for the University, and at length the Legate was so far pacified as to promise his pardon on condition of the clergy and scholars making an act of full submission. Thomas Fuller* gives a lively description of the spectacle that took place:—

"They [the Oxford clergy and scholars] went from St. Paul's, in London, to Durham House, in the Strand, no short Italian, but an English long mile, all on foot;

* "Church History" Book iii., cent. xiii., p. 62.

the Bishops of England, for the more state of the businesse accompanying them, as partly accessary to their fault, for pleading in their behalf. When they came to the Bishop of Carlile's (now Worcester) House, the scholars went the rest of their way barefoot, *sine capis et mantulis*, which some understand 'without capes or cloaks.' And thus the great Legate at last was really reconciled unto them." Richard Poor was Bishop from 1228 till his death in 1237, and the next Bishop was not elected until 1248, so that the Legate inhabited the house while the see was vacant. The Strand was used on an occasion like this, but ordinarily it was treated as nothing more than a back way from the city, which was very badly paved. The Thames was then the Silent (but largely used) Highway from place to place.

In 1315 a petition of the inhabitants of Westminster represented the footway from Temple Bar to the King's Palace at Westminster as so bad that the feet of horses and rich and poor men received constant damage; and that the footway was interrupted by thickets and bushes. Soon afterwards, in an Ordinance of Edward III. in Council, dated 1353, the highway is described as "so deep and miry, and the pavement so broken and worn as to be very dangerous both to men and carriages." As late as Henry VIII.'s reign an Act was passed (1532) for "paving the streetway between Charing Cross and Strand Cross, at the charge of the owners of the land," and in this it is described as "full of pits and sloughs, very perilous and noisome."

The Strand was, however, a thoroughfare of considerable antiquity, and it appears to have been used by the Romans as a military road watched by sentinels for

the protection of the river. In later times it was for centuries unbuilt upon, and continued to be a very unsafe place of resort.

It was not until after the Norman Conquest that the famous water-washed mansions on the Thames were gradually built along the road from the Liberties of London almost to Westminster. No layman would venture here for many years, and it was powerful bishops, surrounded by the protection of the Church, who built this long line of important buildings, and inhabited them for centuries. Selden specially pointed this out, as is recorded in his "Table Talk." He said, "Anciently the noblemen lay within the City for safety and security; but the bishops' houses were by the water-side, because they were held sacred persons whom nobody would hurt."

It is not necessary to do more than mention some of these mansions, which, in the more settled times of the sixteenth and following centuries, were inhabited by great nobles. The Inn of the Bishop of Exeter was afterwards Essex House, that of the Bishop of Bath became Arundel House, and those of the Bishops of Llandaff and Chester were swallowed up by the imposing palace of the Protector Somerset. The Bishop of Carlisle's house became Worcester House, belonging to the Dukes of Beaufort, and that of the Archbishops of York was conveyed to George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham.

Of all these houses Durham House has one of the fullest and most interesting histories. Norden records that it was built by Anthony Bek (Bishop from 1283 to 1311), and Stow attributes the building to Thomas de Hatfield, who succeeded Richard de Bury in 1345, but

we have already seen that the house existed half a century before the former and more than a century before the latter date. It is an honour to the house that Richard de Aungerville, called "of Bury," because he was born at Bury St. Edmunds, lived in this house. He was a man of importance in his time: Lord Chancellor of the Kingdom, a Prince Bishop of the Church, and, moreover, the author of the first book written by a perfect book lover on the treatment of his books—the ever memorable "Philobiblon," "finished in our *manor house of Auckland on the* 24th day of January, in the year of our Lord 1344[-5], the fifty-eighth year of our age being exactly completed, and the eleventh year of our Pontificate drawing to an end: to the glory of God. Amen."

De Bury was an enthusiastic collector, at a time when books were not always easy to obtain, and he is said to have possessed more books than all his brother bishops together could boast. He had a separate library at each of his houses, and wherever he was residing so many books were lying about his rooms that it was difficult for his visitors to move there without treading upon them. Whenever he was free from guests he had books read to him, and after meals he would discuss the subject of the reading with his attendants. He gathered books around him and scholars also. He founded Durham College at Oxford, and left his library to the foundation. At the time of the dissolution of the Religious Houses his college was broken up and the library was dispersed. A catalogue of its contents does not exist. He emulated the most eminent Foreign Book collectors, and his name will always stand high in the noble roll of English book lovers.

Durham Place has little more recorded history until in the reign of Henry VIII., Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, " conveyed the house to the king in fee "; and then for more than half a century there were many distinguished inhabitants. The King seems to have granted the use of the house to the Earl of Wiltshire, as we find him requesting the Earl to "let Doctor Cranmer have entertainment in your house at Durham Place for a time to the intent he may bee there quiet to accomplish my request, and let him lack neither bookes ne anything requisite for his studies." In 1550 the French Ambassador, Mons. de Chastillon, and his colleagues were lodged in Durham house, "which was furnished with hangings of the kings for the nonce." Edward VI., in the second year of his reign, granted Durham House for life, or until she was otherwise advanced, to the Lady Elizabeth, his sister, afterwards Queen Elizabeth, but in some way it passed from the Princess to Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, and was his principal London residence when the young king died. Mary, on coming to the crown, restored it to Tunstall, the same Bishop who had originally conveyed it away. Elizabeth again dispossessed the Bishops of Durham of the house, and first granted it to Sir Henry Sidney, who, in March, 1567-8, applied to Archbishop Parker for a licence to eat meat in Lent "for my boy Philip Sidney, who is somewhat subject to sickness."

About 1583 it was granted to its greatest inhabitant, Sir Walter Ralegh, who lived here for twenty years until his fall. It is pleasant to think of the residence of this great spirit here, and Aubrey gives us one little picture that rivets our attention: "I well remember

his study, which was on a little turret that looked into and over the Thames, and the prospect which is as pleasant perhaps as any in the world." I can see that turret in my mind's eye, and it is ever present with the man himself. However altered, this is the same view we have from the Adelphi Terrace, and in spite of changes the noble river is still beneath us, and at eventide, when the view is at its best, the same starry heavens are above us that looked down on Ralegh in his little turret.

Norden (1593) describes the house, "the hall whereof is stately and high, supported with lofty marble pillars. It standeth on the Thamise very pleasantly."

When James I. succeeded Elizabeth, Ralegh's enemy, Robert Cecil, was in the ascendant, and he caused the house to be taken from Ralegh. Tobias Matthew, Bishop of Durham, set forth the claim of the see to its old town house. Ralegh opposed the claim, but the King and Council (May 25, 1603) recognised the right of the see to the house, and he, in a letter of remonstrance to the Lord Keeper Egerton, states that he had been in possession of the house for about twenty years and had expended £2,000 upon it in repairs out of his own purse.

Bishop Howson was at Durham House in 1630, and Bishop Morton was the last Bishop to reside there. After his election, he, a Bishop of the Northern Province, obtained permission, 29th June, 1632, to receive confirmation within the province of Canterbury, and was accordingly confirmed 2nd July in the chapel attached to Durham House. About 1640 the house came into the possession of Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, and it is said that the grant confirmed by

Act of Parliament (16 Car. I.) was subject to a payment of £200 per annum to the see of Durham.

Great changes were made after the arrangements come to by James I., and Sir Robert Cecil (soon afterwards Earl of Salisbury), who inhabited the next house on the east, took care to obtain some pickings for himself. He encroached upon the gardens and obtained possession of the stables of Durham House fronting the Strand, upon which was built the New Exchange in 1609. The house and grounds required renovation when Lord Pembroke bought them. He therefore obtained from John Webb, the pupil and friend of Inigo Jones, a design for a large house on the site, the elevation of which is still to be seen in the collection of Jones's architectural and other drawings at Worcester College, Oxford. The Civil War took place, and no more was heard of the new building. Later on some buildings were erected on part of the grounds and named Durham Yard. These houses were not very well inhabited, they were too near the New Exchange for that, but some of them were of interest, for Voltaire was a frequent visitor at the house of his great friend Brinsden, the wine merchant (whom he addressed as "Dear John"), in this yard; Sir Godfrey Kneller's first London residence was here, as was also Garrick's office as a wine merchant.

There is not much more history to be related of Durham House, which fell into decay, and was little thought of till the brothers Adam began to rebuild the place. The New Exchange, built on the site of the stables fronting the Strand, was opened by James I. on April 11, 1609, and existed for a century and a quarter.

During much of this period it was one of the sights of London, and a fashionable resort for the idle, who sauntered their time away amidst the bustle of the brilliant bazaar, and gave occasion for many allusions in the plays of the time. Besides the shops of haberdashers, milliners, etc., there were those of prosperous booksellers. One of the chief publishers of the Restoration period, Henry Herringman, the friend of Dryden and Pepys, was there for some years. In 1737 the New Exchange came to an end, and the building was pulled down.

It was a bold scheme that the architects, Robert and John Adam, undertook when they planned the uniform raising of the site of Durham House to the level of the Strand. This they did by throwing a series of arches over the whole declivity, allowing the wharves to remain, connecting the river with the Strand by a spacious archway, and over these extensive vaultings erecting several well-built streets and a handsome terrace towards the river.

It appears a still bolder undertaking when we know that the vast expenditure was devoted to building on land merely leased for ninety-nine years. The projectors were nearly ruined before the undertaking was completed, because the cost was greater than that on which they calculated. They were also disappointed in their expectations of obtaining rents for the accommodation of Government stores in the arches below the buildings.

The Adams, as Scotchmen, patronised by Lord Bute, became the objects of most virulent popular abuse from the enemies of Bute. They managed, however, to

overcome all obstacles and bring their labours to a successful issue.

The first trouble took the form of a complaint from the Citizens of London that the rights of the Lord Mayor as Conservator of the Thames had been interfered with by encroachment on the river. This was got over by means of a special Act of Parliament (12 Geo. III., c. 34, 1771), giving permission for the necessary encroachment to be made. The next difficulty arose from the funds of the projectors being exhausted after the foundations were completed and before the superstructures were built. The Adams saw their way to obtaining the necessary funds by means of a lottery, in which houses to be finished were the prizes. In order to carry this out they obtained another Act of Parliament in 1773, allowing the lottery, which was completely successful. The house of the Society of Arts in John Street, which is the chief building in the Adelphi, was a part of the original design, and the first stone was laid by Lord Romney, the President, in 1771. The Society was originally founded in 1754, and after several removals to different places of meeting in and about the Strand, the authorities were fortunate in obtaining suitable premises in a new and quiet district, which they took possession of in 1774.

It is not possible in this outline of the features of a quiet neighbourhood, within a stone's throw of one of the main arteries of London, to give the history of the Society of Arts at any length, and I should become tedious if I attempted to do so. I may, however, be allowed in this place to draw your attention to a few of the main points of this history of more than a century and a half. In 1754, the country was settling down for

a time, after a long period of unrest and rebellious outbreaks. England's industrial condition was eminently unsatisfactory.*

Certain men of mark, wishing to see an improvement initiated, joined together to form a society with this object, which was done in the year 1754. The original founder was William Shipley, a drawing master, who aimed at the advancement of the Fine Arts among other subjects. He proposed that the society "should bestow premiums on a certain number of boys or girls under the age of sixteen, who shall produce the best species of drawing, and show themselves most capable when properly examined."

One of the first prizes (£15) was adjudged to Richard Cosway, then a boy under twelve years of age, and afterwards the famous miniature painter. Premiums were subsequently given to John Bacon, Joseph Nollekens, William Woollett, George Romney, John Flaxman, J. M. W. Turner, Edwin Landseer, Mulready, Millais, and many other artists who afterwards became famous.

Other subjects were attended to in the early years of the society, and among the first awards were some made for the discovery of cobalt and the cultivation of madder in Great Britain. For some years much attention was given to agriculture, and before the formation of the Board of Agriculture the Society of Arts was the chief representative of that art in the

* Sir Henry Trueman Wood, Secretary of the Royal Society of Arts, published in 1910 a most valuable and interesting sketch of the chief industries at the time of the foundation of the Society, entitled "Industrial England in the Middle of the Eighteenth Century." Murray.

country. Under its auspices the first exhibition of pictures and the first exhibition of manufactures were held in London.

All this activity drew a large number of distinguished men to join the ranks, and the roll of members is one of which any society might be proud.

As in the middle of the seventeenth century, all lovers of science, history, and literature joined the newly established Royal Society, so in the middle of the eighteenth century statesmen, noblemen, men of letters, artists, merchants and other men of business were anxious to become members of the Society of Arts.

From a literary point of view, the most interesting period of the Society's history was that when Johnson and Garrick were prominent members. When Garrick was elected, he was living in Southampton Street, Covent Garden, but afterwards he removed to the house in the Adelphi Terrace which is marked by a memorial tablet. Johnson's fashionable friend, Topham Beauclerk, was also a member, and readers of Boswell's great work will remember the pathetic conversation between Johnson and his biographer respecting these two men on the terrace. "We stopped a little while by the rails of the Adelphi, looking on the Thames, and I said to him, with some emotion, that I was now thinking of two friends we had lost, who once lived in the building behind us—Beauclerk and Garrick. 'Ay, sir,' said he tenderly, 'and two such friends as cannot be supplied.' "

The Prince Consort was President of the Society from 1843 until his death in 1861, and he greatly helped its progress owing to the interest he took in its renewed prosperity. The Society was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1847, and with the Prince's urgent encour-

agement, it took a leading part in organising the great exhibition of 1851—the first International Exhibition.

Of late years the work of the Society has developed in many directions, and it has become the parent of certain flourishing institutions, some of the objects initiated by it requiring special organisation for complete fruition. Thus, for instance, out of the technological examinations has grown the wide-spreading action of the City and Guilds of London Technical Institute.

In the hall, where you are now sitting, we find a genuine Adam room, slightly altered in certain details; but on the whole much as Robert Adam left it. The distinguishing characteristic of the room is seen in the pictures of James Barry, which were painted after the house was completed. They were publicly exhibited in 1783 and 1784, and were considered to be one of the sights of London.

These pictures are highly decorative, although they are not altogether to the taste of the present day. They are of great interest historically, and contain a very remarkable collection of portraits. For pure elegance of conception the Grecian Harvest Home, at the west end of the room, ranks high among the works of English painters of the eighteenth century.

You see there in the picture of the "Victors at Olympia" the portrait of Barry himself, and those of Captain Cook and Dr. Burney in the picture of the Thames. The portraits of distinguished members are numerous in the picture of "The Society." Samuel Johnson is seen between the Duchesses of Rutland and Devonshire. Shipley is also there, and the portrait of Arthur Young at the extreme left is considered to be the best representation of the great agriculturist. A

judicious selection of great men of all nations appears in the large picture of Elysium.

Barry was well treated by the Society, but he died in poverty and at war with the world. His body lay in state in this room on the night of March 7th, 1806, previous to the burial in St. Paul's.

I hope, in attempting to revive some of the reminiscences of the past, I have been able to prove that there are few places with a fuller history or more interesting associations than the district of the Adelphi and the home of the Society of Arts.