

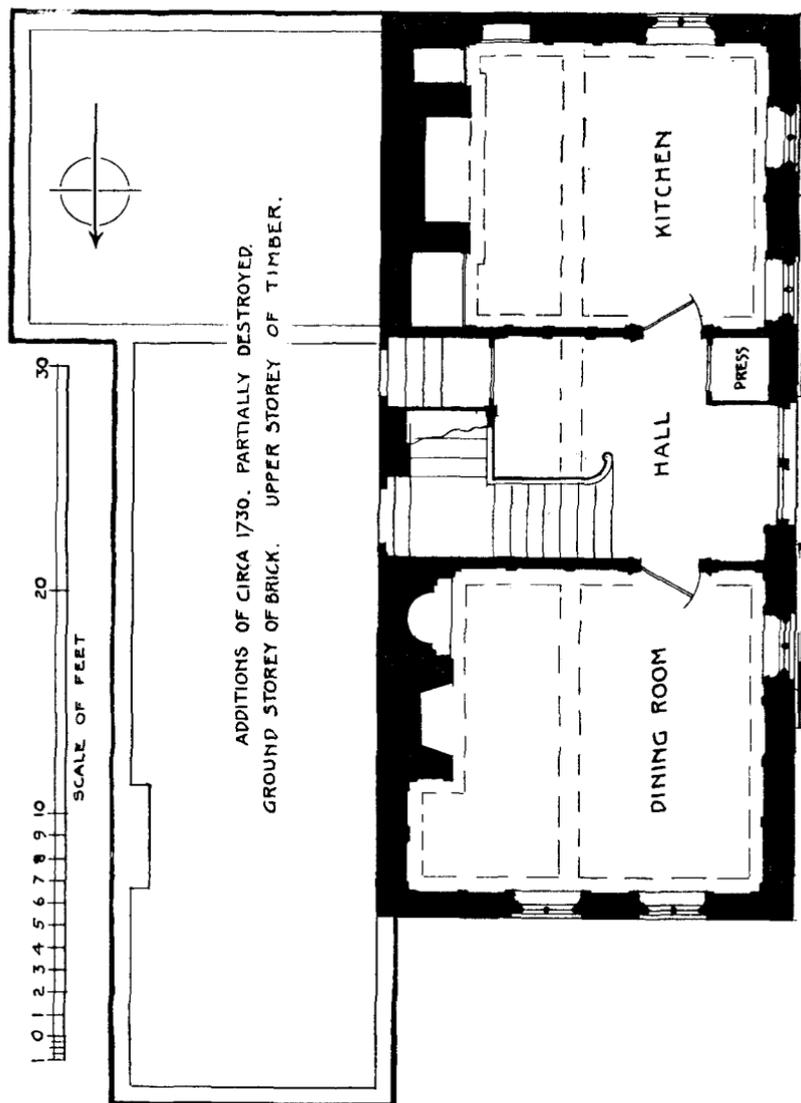
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY HOUSE AT CAMBERWELL.

BY

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IN the Camberwell portion of Old Kent Road there stands a red-brick house of two storeys and dormers, now obscured from the road by drab dwellings and shops, erected in the 19th century, but formerly only separated from it by its own garden. The building is traditionally known in the neighbourhood as the Old Manor House, and in deeds and leases of conveyance of the 19th century is referred to as such. What claim, however, it has to this name is unknown, indeed its history previous to the above mentioned conveyances is most obscure and little is known of the building before its acquisition by the South Metropolitan Gas Company, whose works it adjoined, in 1901. In that year the Company leased the property to a firm of skin dressers who used it for the pursuit of their trade until 1926 when the Company took possession themselves.

The earliest and principal portion of the house was built about 1680. This is a simple rectangular block, one room deep, and is of two storeys with cellars and dormers, built of brick and roofed with plain tiles. It has a central hall containing the stairs with single rooms on the north and south at each stage, and faces west towards the Old Kent Road. About 1730 additions were built on the east extending the full length of the house and 8 feet 6 inches beyond it on the north, the northern portion has been removed recently. These additions were of two storeys, the lower storey being of brickwork 9 inches thick, and the upper storey of timber. They were therefore of frail character as compared with the



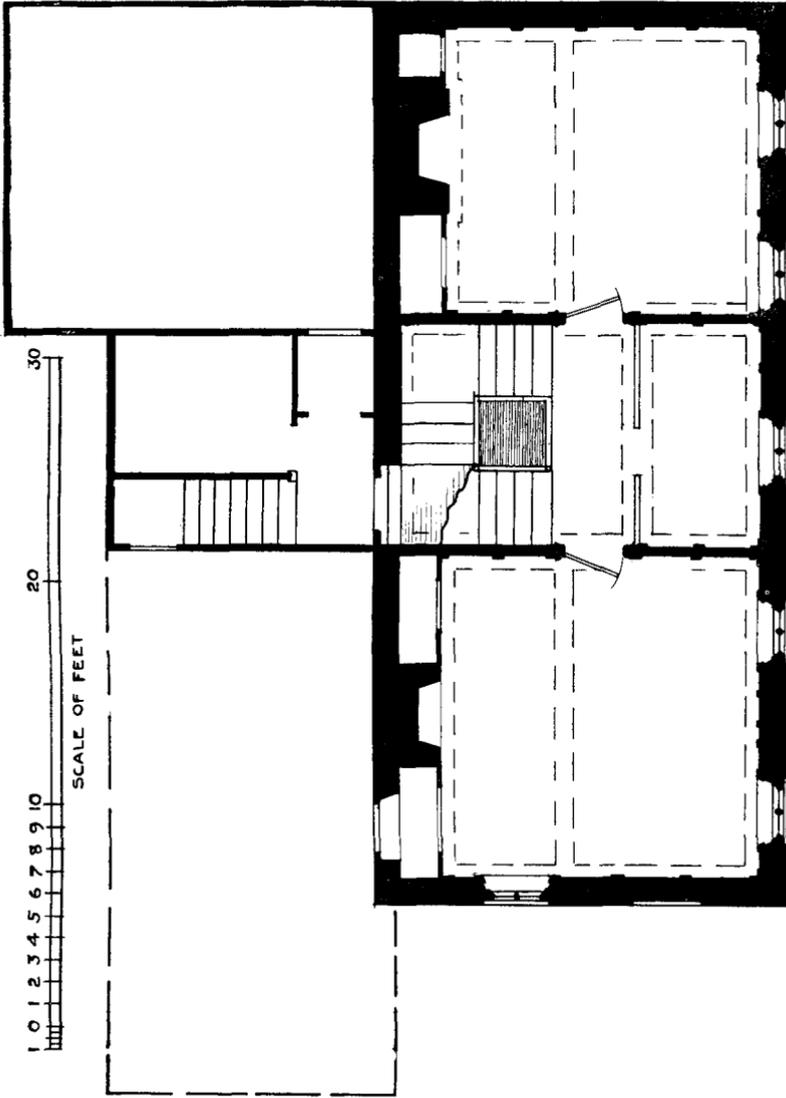


FIG. 2.—PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR.

older part of the building which is of 14-inch brickwork throughout. At the same time a new stairs was inserted, the front of the house remodelled, and the main entrance embellished by a porch or ornamental doorway.

When thus complete the house must have presented a charming appearance as seen from the Old Kent Road across its garden (fig. 3). The alterations of the 18th century had the effect of imparting balance to the central portion of the front, and to this end the plinth and cornice were extended across this part of the front only. It will be observed by reference to the plans, figs. 1 and 2, that in the insertion of the windows immediately flanking the central line on both floors, balance was the main consideration and that comparatively little regard was paid to the positions they occupied in the rooms or the manner in which the old panelling was interrupted. The ornamental portion of the main doorway has disappeared. It was removed, probably, when the dwellings, above mentioned, were erected in front and approached within a few feet of the entrance. The outline of this doorway, however, is distinctly marked on the existing brickwork, even to the exact contour of its mouldings. Immediately above the doorway is a window embellished by rusticated pilasters and lintel and surmounted by a cornice, the cornice being extended on either side to embrace the flanking windows. These last are of plainer character but are connected vertically by a shallow recess and each of those on the ground floor has a small cornice. The whole of this work, including the mouldings of the cornices is carried out in brickwork. The front is surmounted by a plain parapet above which are two dormer windows set in vertical line with the flanking windows.

The rooms of the older part of the house are panelled in pine, painted, and arranged in large panels with moulded dados and cornices, fig. 4. The stairs, figs. 5 and 6, are typical of about 1730 date, and though less ornate bear marked resemblance to an example at Glastonbury dated

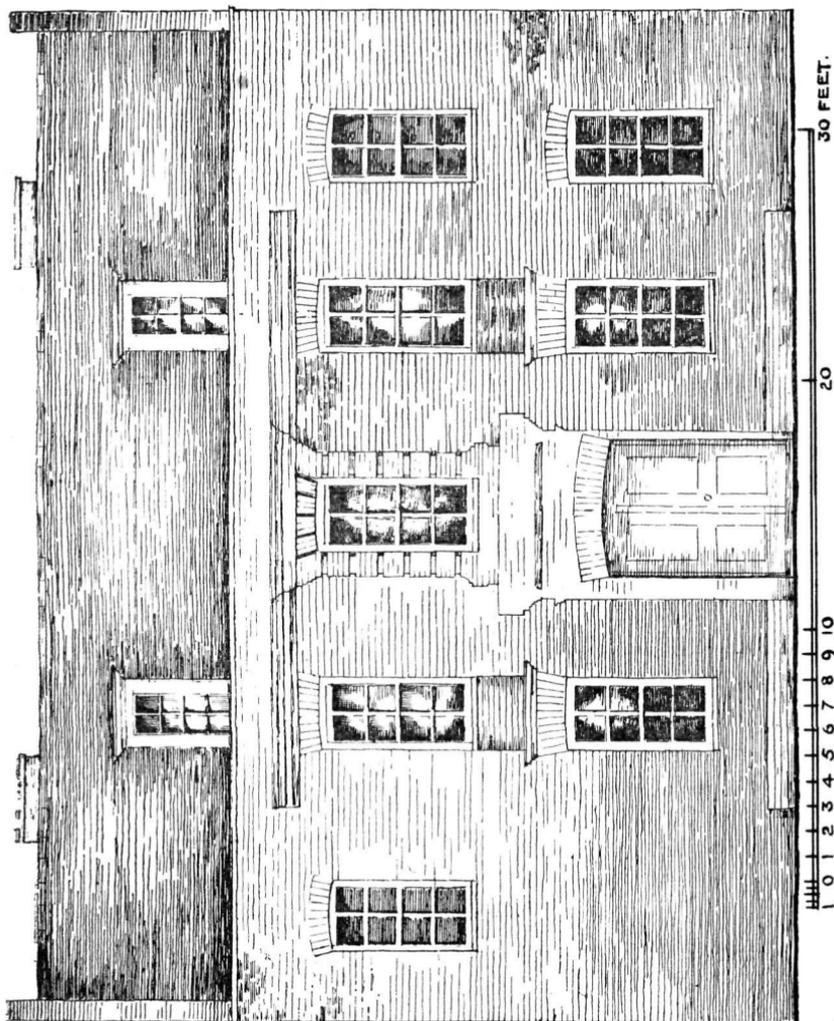


FIG. 3.—FRONT OR WEST ELEVATION.

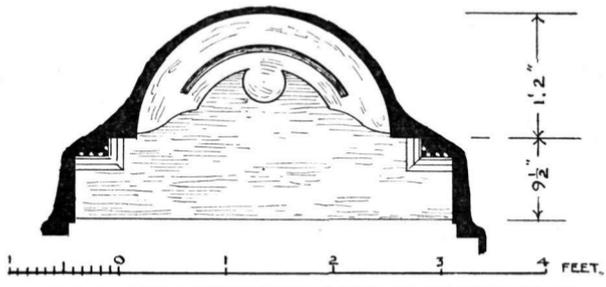
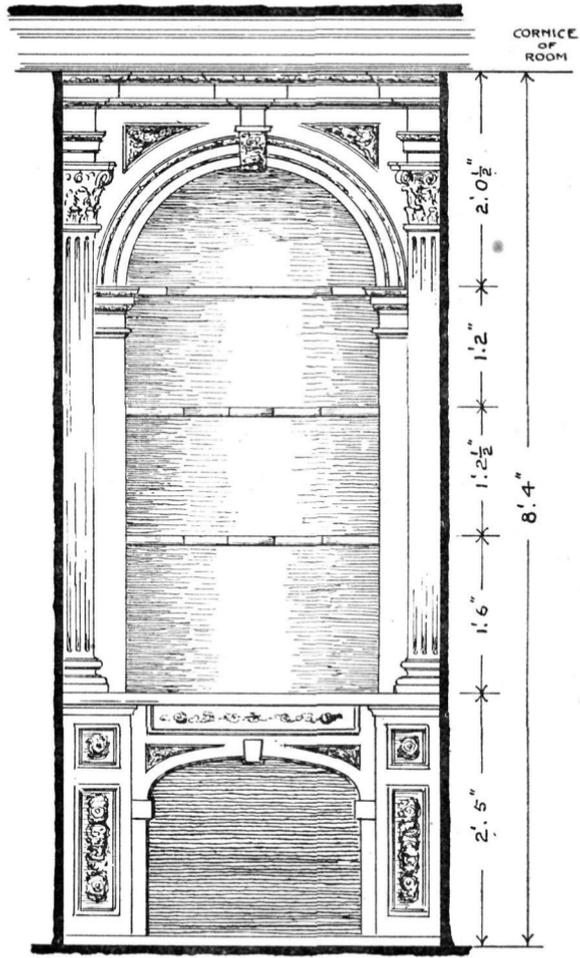


FIG. 7.—DECANTER-CUPBOARD IN DINING-ROOM.

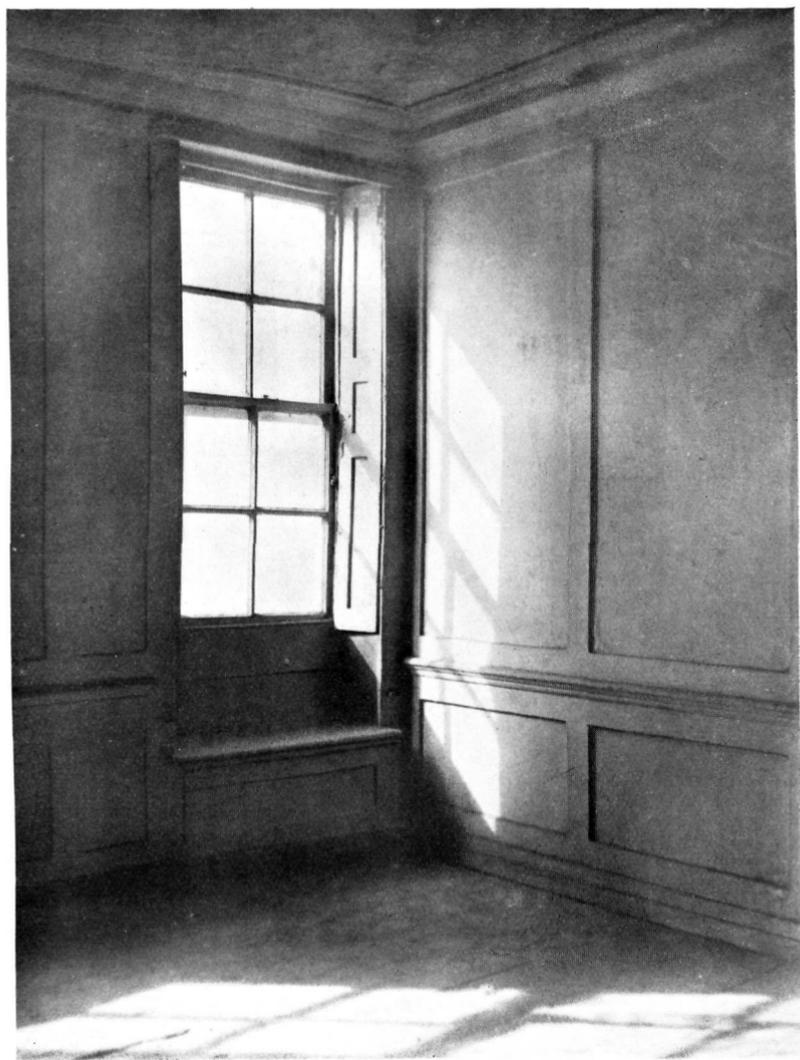


Fig. 4.—WALL PANELLING.

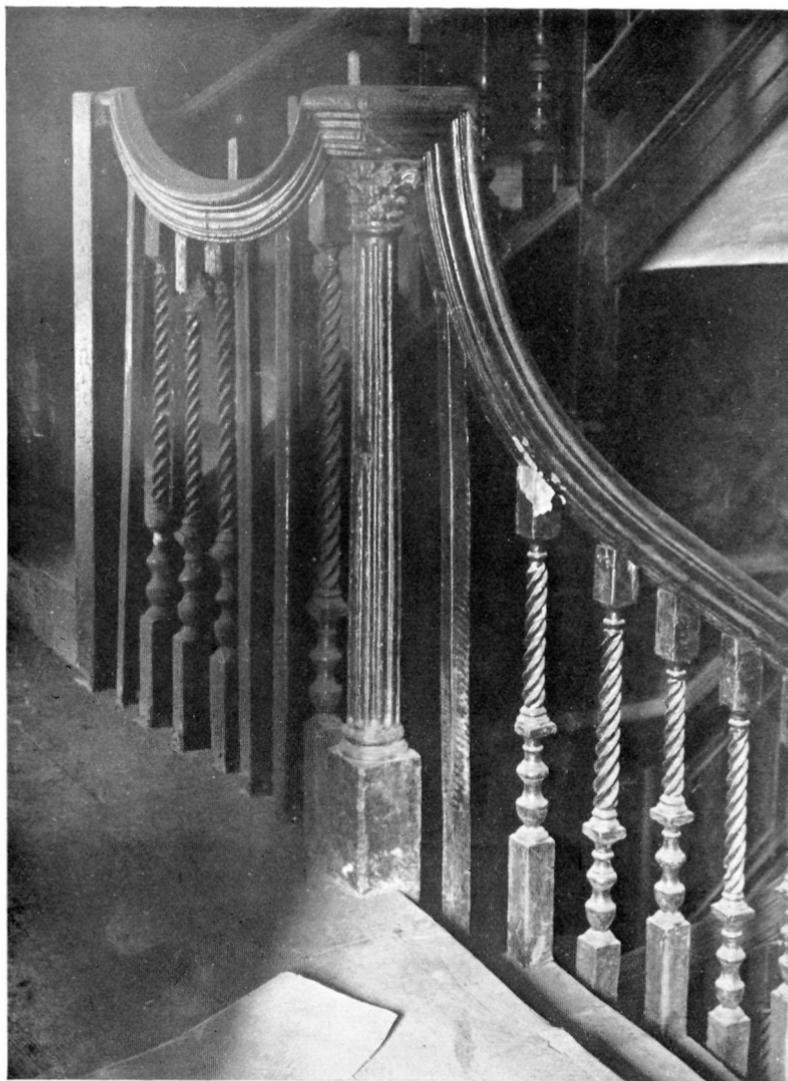


Fig. 5.—FIRST FLOOR LANDING.

1726. It is 3 feet 6 inches wide. The balusters are of varied type, some having spiral ornament and others being of turned work throughout, all are cut from bars about $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches square. Many of the original balusters are missing and their places are supplied by modern copies or plain bars. The newels from the hall to the first landing are fluted columns with capitals and bases; those from the first landing to the dormers are square and are surmounted by terminals, fig. 6. The outer string is embellished at the end of each step with a bracket carved with foliated and scroll work.

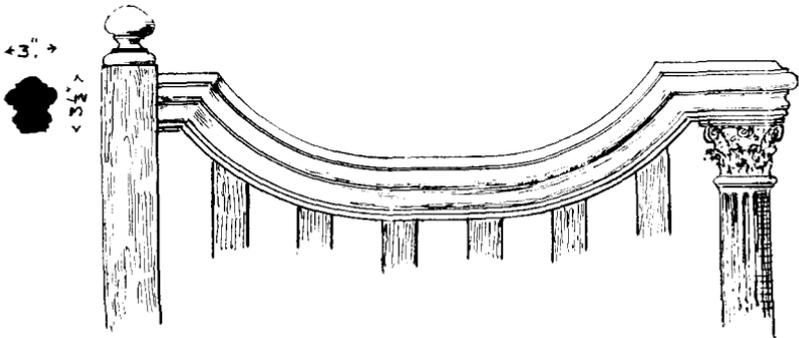


FIG. 6.—HANDRAIL AT FIRST LANDING.

Inserted in a recess at the south-east corner of the dining-room is an elaborately carved decanter cupboard, fig. 7. The lower part of the cupboard has a small drawer, the knobs for opening it being formed out of the foliated carving on the face of the drawer. The upper portion, containing the shelves, has a semi-circular head and is flanked by fluted pilasters, the whole being surmounted by a cornice immediately beneath the cornice of the room. The two lower shelves have circular brackets for the decanters and grooves for plates. This is a fine and well preserved piece of furniture of about 1730.

For the procuring of the photographs, Figs. 4 and 5, we are indebted to our member Mr. J. A. Chamberlin, through whose courtesy, and that of Mr. Walter T. Layton, access to the "Manor House" was so freely granted by the South Metropolitan Gas Works Company.—Ed.