Papers read before the Society on the occasion of the Excursion to Hatfield and St. Alban's, on Wednesday, July 30th, 1879.

HATFIELD.

By the Rev. J. M. Guilding.

Hatfield is really of Saxon origin, and was built by one of the Kings of Mercia. When Henry I. founded the bishopric of Ely, Hatfield was handed over to that see, and remained in the Bishop's possession till the time of Henry VIII. In the reign of Henry VII., Bishop Morton, a great architect, who built the tower of Canterbury Cathedral, rebuilt the palace in the style in which it appears now. Henry VIII. exchanged certain property with the Bishop of Ely, and Hatfield became the property of the Crown. Edward VI. was staying there when he received the news of his father's death, and the Princess Elizabeth was a state prisoner here, under the charge of Sir Thomas Pope, the founder of Trinity College, Oxford, in the reign of Mary. Pope was a courteous gaoler, and the Princess was entertained by him with several masques; so much so was he that the old chronicler says the Queen misliked it, and sent a strong letter to Sir Thomas, ordering him that Elizabeth should not be so amused. Hatfield remained a Royal manor house till the time of James I., who took a fancy to Theobald's, the property of Lord Burleigh, and exchanged it for Hatfield, which then became the property of the Cecils. The younger son of Lord Burleigh was created Earl of Salisbury in the morning, and the elder an Earl in the afternoon of the same day, so that the younger branch of the family thus took precedence. The great hall, the banquetting hall of the old palace of Hatfield, once a fine room, is now the stable, and is in capital preservation. Edward VI. kept his court in this hall, and Elizabeth remained here for four or five years. The grave of Copenhagen, the last charger of the Duke of Wellington, which he gave to the Marchioness of Salisbury, is close to the wall of the old banquetting room. The mortuary chapel of the church adjoining contains the remains of the first Marquis of Salisbury. The finest old tennis court in the kingdom is to be found in Hatfield old palace, and is well worthy of notice. The new palace, which like the old one is of red brick, was finished in 1611, having taken about five years to build. Tradition states that Lord Burleigh was his own architect, but this is doubtful. It is a complete specimen of Jacobean architecture, and a comparison with Bramshill House seems to show that it was probably the design of Inigo Jones.

The portrait of Elizabeth hangs on the walls of Hatfield, and as we enter the great hall at Hatfield, we are confronted by the full length portrait of her famous rival; the graceful presence in long dark robe and flowing veil, which in spite of the difficulty about the true features of Mary, is as real and familiar to us as the figure of Elizabeth herself. In the long library are stored the treasures of the Burleigh correspondence—the letters to and from the greatest of the Cecils—which open to us the dangers, the plots, and the politics of half a century; and in the cases are books of his own collecting, many of them marked and noted by Lord Burleigh himself, and thus showing the care with which they were studied. And the whole landscape, of which Hatfield is the centre, is hardly less suggestive. Hundreds of the venerable oak trees in the park mark their centuries of growth; and if the famous tree under which Elizabeth, according to the local tradition, received the news of her sister's death, and of her own accession, has become a shattered ruin, there are many a group of giants whose broad branches spread themselves over the ferny hollows as green and as vigorous in their leafage as when the Princess swept along under them in the morning dew—

"To rouse the deer at five."

And here and there in the distance, beyond broad turf rides or open lawns in the midst of the fern, glimpses are caught of the turrets and cupolas and glancing oriels of the house, struck, it may be, by a gleam of sunlight, or chequered by passing cloud shadows. Everywhere, within range of the eye, extends the woodland. Indeed, for the seclusion and antique character of its park, few places in England can rival Hatfield, although, no doubt, here, as elsewhere, the years have not passed by without many and great changes. The stately gardens, in which we may fancy the first Cecils who settled here delighted, have disappeared. There is, indeed, an evergreen maze, such as Lord Bacon did not disapprove; and there are *berceaux* and *cabinets de verdure*, with a quaint leafy quadrangle adjoining the house. But these are of comparatively modern date, as is the sunk garden of sweet-scented flowers, which, it is said, was the original of Lady Corisande's, in "Lothair." And the so-called "vineyards," in a remote part of the park, may, as their name suggests, have produced their clusters and had their winepress in earlier days. It is long since, at any rate, that they were converted into a sort of woody amphitheatre, with arched walks of dark yew, and a descent by terraces to Dutch-like ponds and water works below.

The mansion contains a fine collection of historical portraits (Henry VIII. and his wives, by Holbein, Elizabeth, James I., Count Gondemar, the Spanish Ambassador, who procured the execution of Sir Walter Raleigh, Le Balafre, the Duke of Guise, with a great scar on his face, and many others), and numerous objects of interest.