History of Kettel Hall, Oxford.

A Paper read before the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society by Mrs. Mee.

The gradual disappearance of the older houses in our towns and cities is a subject of regret to most people. Most of them are, though picturesque, uncomfortable, insanitary, and incapable of adaptation to the habits and requirements of modern life. Therefore they have to go; and the fine old mansion, the quaint gabled inn, and the irregular cottage give place to the fashionable shop, the company's hotel, and the general provider's establishment, with its cheerful embellishment of highly-coloured posters and sky-signs, &c. This sort of "progress" has gone on largely in Oxford, and the few old houses which remain are rendered increasingly worthy of our attention. The Christ Church almshouses, Bishop King's palace, and Kettel Hall are perhaps the best specimens of these old houses now remaining to us.

The history of Kettel Hall is to some extent associated with that of an earlier building on or near the same spot. In Ingram's "Memorials of Oxford" (vol. iii. p. 16) is the following passage:— Kettel Hall still remains on the north side of Broad Street; built in 1615 by Dr. Ralph Kettel, President of Trinity College, for the use of students, on the site of an ancient building called Perles Hall, and by corruption Perilous Hall, "Aula Periculosa," mentioned by that name so early as the reign of Edward I. (1272-1307). It was so called from a family of the name of Perles or Peverells, many of whom are mentioned in the "Testa de Nevill." As to these Perles I can find but little, except that one Perles, who was said to be an illegitimate son of William the Conqueror, was given land in Oxford, and may or may not have built a house there. However, there is no doubt that for many centuries there stood, outside the north wall and ditch, a house called Perles or Perilous Hall. The contiguous land was originally held by the Convent of

Godstow, for in 1291 we read (see Wood, fol. 226a)—"For the greater enlargement of the enclosure for Durham College (the precursor of Trinity) Mabile Wafre, Abbess of Godstow, with the convent there, willed and granted to them divers tenements and lands, and, among the rest, whatsoever right they had in void ground near Perilous Hall, in Horsemonger Street, part of which Hall stood where now Kettel Hall standeth." The property, which included Perilous Hall, must have shortly after come into the hands of Adam de Brome, who seems to have presented it to Edward II.; for we read in Wood's "Annals of Oriel College," in 1325, King Edward II. gave to Oriel a messuage in the suburbs called Perilous Hall, which he had a little time before obtained by gift from Adam de Brome. It remained for many centuries in the hands of Oriel College. Of its history or occupants there is no trace, and as we read that in 1546 there were only eight halls still inhabited, it was probably deserted, but not apparently entirely ruined. There are some reasons for supposing that the present building includes some fragments of this earlier hall, but it is very doubtful. 1615 is the date always assigned to its erection, but Oriel College has furnished me with particulars of leases to various persons beginning with the year 1597, when a lease was granted to George Caulfield, Esq. At this time George Caulfield was a prominent man in Oxford. He had five times represented the city in Parliament, and in 1587 he became Recorder of Oxford. In the parish registers of St. Mary Magdalene, in which parish the north side of Broad Street is included, are entries of his marriage with Miss Martha Taverner, of Woodeaton, and of the birth of several sons, one of whom was afterwards made Lord Caulfield, Baron of Charlemont, so that he obviously resided habitually in this parish. Anthony à Wood refers in a note to "Aula Periculosa," at one time called "Aula Caulfieldiana" and in Twyne's "Apologia," written in 1617, he speaks of it in similar terms, adding that it had Durham College ground as its western boundary. He also gives a fanciful derivation of its name as being "dangerous," being near the college with which George Dangerfield was connected. This all seems to show that we are not wrong in identifying "Aula Periculosa" with Caulfield's house, and placing it on the site of Kettel Hall. It can scarcely have been absolutely decayed if it served as the residence of a man of George Caulfield's position. In 1607, it was again let to a Mr. Richard Lowe, described as a clothworker of the City of London,

but his occupation was very short. Probably some part of the house at all events was in a bad way, for we read that, in 1615, Dr. Ralph Kettel, President of Trinity, pulled down the ruins (the ruinous parts?) of "Aula Periculosa," and erected in its place a building which he called after his own name, "to the end that it might be a place for the reception of Commoners of Trinity, and for their convenience a door was made through the wall parting the garden of it from Trinity grove, and there was no entrance from the street." The said wall had been built according to the will of Sir Thomas Pope, who founded Trinity College, and, dying in 1562, left £100 to build a wall round the garden and grove of Trinity College—presumably, the old wall to the north of this house, through which was a small door admitting to the college garden, only recently walled up. The stones of this wall (now very crumbly) came originally from the Dominican House of the Grey Friars in the south of Oxford, in St. Ebbe's parish. Henry VIII., always on the look-out to turn an honest or dishonest penny, sold the wall to persons named Andrews and How, who resold it to one Frere, who sold it to Sir Thomas Pope's executors. However, the wall still remains. Of course as to "Aula Periculosa," the question is—Did Dr. Kettel entirely remove it, or did he adapt any part of it to his new purpose? In the 1578 map, when it must have been standing, it is drawn as a narrow building with gables running crosswise to the present house, but probably such small drawings are merely to indicate that something of a building stood on the ground, without attempting to indicate its shape or style. I may mention that in digging a drain the foundations of an old wall were uncovered a little to the west of the present house. In any case, whether Dr. Kettel adapted any part of Perilous Hall, or whether he entirely removed it, there is no doubt that the greater part of the present house dates from his presidentship, and rightly bears his name.

Ralph or Raynulph Kettel was the third son of John Kettel, of King's Langley, in Hertfordshire, and was brought to Trinity College at the age of eleven, by Lady Elizabeth Pope, possibly as a chorister, as in the registration lists his matriculation is entered under the year 1579, and his age given as fifteen. He took his B.A. 1582, M.A. 1586, B.D. 1594, and D.D. 1597, in which year he was elected President of Trinity, which office he held until his death in 1643. He is described by a contemporary as a very

tall man, white-haired from an early age. His ordinary dress was a russet cloth gown, but when attired in his gown, surplice and hood, he is said to have had "a terrible gigantique aspect," and "his sharp grey eyes" were everywhere. He was clever, but most eccentric. One of the Fellows of Trinity in his time said of him, "Dr. Kettel's brain is like a hasty pudding—memory, judgement and fancy all stirred up together." He was most zealous in keeping the undergraduates in order, and generally reproved their offences when assembled in the chapel. It sounds strange to our modern notions of dress to hear that he greatly objected to a man coming into chapel in a white cap, for says one of his biographers, "the President at once concluded that he had been drunk overnight, and had a headache, and was sure to have at him at once." Every Tuesday, all the undergraduates had to attend in chapel to hear Dr. Kettel expound the Thirty-nine Articles. They were required to stand up when he entered, and used to listen for his step—well known from a peculiar drag of the right foot, which is said to have given warning, "like the rattle-snake," of his approach. One Egerton, a festive student, could so well imitate this peculiar step that the men were often entrapped into rising with solemn faces when Egerton entered late. It was no doubt a useful defect in gait, as one of the President's habits was to go up and down the college and peep through the keyholes, "to see if the boys did follow their books or no." When the said boys were at lectures he generally came to observe them, and brought his hour glass to time the lecturer, remarking on one occasion that if they did not attend better he should get a *two* hours' glass. Long hair greatly annoyed him, and if he noticed any undergraduate with long hair, we are told "he would bring a pair of scissors in his muffe, which he generally carried, and woe be to him who sat outside the table." Aubreys says, "I remember his cutting Mr. Radford's hair with the knife that chops bread in the buttery, singing as he did so, 'And was not Grim the Collier finely trimmed,' from the play of 'Gammer Gurton's Needle.'" He was difficult to please, and he also objected to wigs, saying they were mostly the scalps of men who had been hanged. Occasionally he instructed his students himself, and made use of remarkable illustrations. On one occasion, when his lecture was on Euclid, he said, "I will shew you how to describe a triangle in a quadrangle. Bring a pig into the quad, and I will set the college dog at him, and he will take the pig by the ear; then

come I and take the dog by the tail, and there is a triangle in a quadrangle for you—*Quod erat faciendum.*" He had strange names for the riotous men of the college; "the worst sort he called Tarra-rags, and others who did no harm," he said, "but were idle, and sauntered about the grove with their hands in their pockets, counting the trees, he called Scobber-lotchers." He shrewdly remarked that those colleges which kept the worst beer had most drunkards, as their men had to go into the public houses in the town "to comfort their stomachs," as he expressed it; so he always had in his college excellent brewed beer—"not better to be got anywhere in Oxford," and we are told with good results.

He held the living of Avington in Hants, and of Garsington near Oxford, with the presidentship, and regularly preached at Garsington on Sunday. An eye-witness describes the tall quaint figure, riding regularly out of the quad on a bay mare, with his little grandson, Ralph Bathurst, before him on the saddle, and a leg of mutton and a loaf of bread tied on behind for his Sunday dinner. On Trinity Sunday, however, he always preached in the College Chapel, and in the prayer for the founder, he frequently misread "Sir Thomas Pope our Confounder." There is record of one other occasion when he preached at Trinity; and Mr. Isham died at the college of small pox, and Dr. Kettel said he should like to preach his funeral sermon. There was a large audience, as many from other colleges always came if he preached, knowing his eccentricities. On this occasion they were certainly gratified, for he took his text and preached a little time from it; then he said he must take another text to please the poor young gentleman's mother; and then he took a third text, as he said, for the greater satisfaction of the young gentleman's grandmother.

We hear also that on one occasion he ended a sermon in the University Church with the remark, "I must now stop, as I see the Doctors of Divinity are all coming out of the tavern opposite, wiping the ale from their mouths." (It was then quite possible to see from the pulpit what was going on at the tavern at the corner, where indeed a publichouse stood till quite recently.) With all these eccentricities he seems to have been really anxious to benefit those under his care, though his methods were odd. If he saw a diligent student of small means he would often put money in at his window, not letting him know where it came from.

He married three times, his last wife being Mrs. Elizabeth

Villars, whom he married 1610, a widow with two beautiful and richly endowed daughters. Dr. Kettel was extremely anxious to find suitable husbands for these young ladies. In the course of his keyhole inspection of the occupants of college apartments, he took notice of a Mr. George Bathurst who had matriculated in 1605, and observed that though he was seldom reading, he was often busy with a needle and thread, trying to patch up his somewhat rusty and dilapidated garments. The President decided that this was a careful and thrifty person, well deserving a good wife, and likely to take care of her fortune. Mr. Bathurst, we are told, was remarkably ugly, but however that might be, the beautiful heiress consented, and the marriage took place, and a son, named Ralph, after Dr. Kettel, became afterwards President of Trinity in 1664. He was the Dr. Bathurst who gave his name to some of the buildings recently pulled down when the President's house was built.

Bad times came, however, for poor Dr. Kettel, and his days are said to have been shortened by the troubles of the civil wars and the changes that followed. He was a regular Church of England man, and succeeded in saving the old paintings in the chapel from the Puritan Commissioner, Lord Saye and Sele. The service was regularly sung in the chapel till the garrison surrendered to the Parliament. This circumstance illustrates the accuracy as to detail of the author of "John Inglesant," as in that book there is a statement about the hero going to hear the music in Trinity Chapel, which has been by some supposed to be a mistake. In 1641 the members of Parliament sent down the oath called the "Protestation" made by them, to be signed by all members of the University over the age of 18 years. Dr. Kettel was one of the few who refused to sign it, but gave as his reason merely that he was an old man and had taken so many oaths he would take no more. In the confused times which followed he seems to have suffered much; a soldier broke his beloved hour-glass, and he was compelled to hide his money and other treasurers. His death occurred in 1643, and he was buried in the chancel of Garsington Church. These particulars are mostly taken from the "Life of Dr. Kettel," written about the year 1680 by John Aubrey, who had known him. In Trinity College hall is a portrait of this singular person, said to be a bad painting, but a fair likeness.

At his death his nephew, Fanshawe Kettel, described as a gentleman of the parish of St. Peter's-in-the-East, obtained a lease of the

house, and probably occupied it, as in the next lease he is said to be of the parish of St. Mary Magdalen. No doubt it was sub-let to students of Trinity. We have one reference to it in 1665 in "Walker's Oxoniana" (vol. 1, p. 106), where mention is made of one John Glendall, a Fellow of Brasenose, who was "Terræ Filius" for that year. He was a lively person and a good actor. Play-acting being strictly forbidden, Mr. Glendall and his friends indulged in secret meetings, when plays were rehearsed and acted by stealth, to select audiences, "sometimes in the stone house near Pembroke, sometimes in Kettel Hall, and sometimes in Holywell mill."

In the "Records of the Collection of Hearth Tax," made in 1665, Fanshawe Kettel's house is placed in the St. Mary Magdalene suburb, and he pays on 16 hearths. At that time there were only two houses paying on more, and only four others on as many. There are still 15 hearths; one has disappeared.

On June 8th, 1661, Anthony Wood says in his diary that an old gentleman named Chamberlain died at Kettel Hall at the advanced age of 110, presumably a visitor, as he was buried somewhere in Warwickshire. This was during the time that Fanshawe Kettel had the lease, as he held it until 1674, when he died and was buried at St. Mary Magdalene. Until 1716 leases were given to various persons of the name of Finch, severally described as of the University of Oxford, "cook," of the University of Oxford, "gentleman," and finally as "Finch of Headington." Probably one Abraham Finch having made his fortune out of his cook's office and his lodgers, retired to the seclusion of Headington, and the President and Fellows of Trinity College became themselves the lessees of Kettel Hall from 1716-1834. There is in a letter from Dr. Charlett, then a Fellow of Trinity, to Dr. Dobson, the President, a complaint that "Finch of Headington" was discovered to be in treaty with Balliol for Kettel Hall, and this could not be allowed to go on. Balliol having demanded time for consideration, Trinity bestirred itself, and disposed of Balliol and Finch of Headington at once. From this date it is not quite clear if Trinity College sub-let the house, or used it as additional rooms for their men, but the few references to it in Boswell's "Life of Johnson" throw a little light on its history.

Dr. Johnson seems to have generally had rooms here whenever he visited Oxford, and in 1754 he stayed for six weeks in the house, being in Oxford with the intention of consulting various books about his dictionary, but Boswell says "not much came of it." Apparently

Dr. Thomas Warton was in charge of the house, as in 1755, Dr. Johnson writes to him "Snatch what time you can from the Hall and the pupils," and again in 1755, on June 10th, in writing to Warton, "I promise myself to repose in Kettel Hall one of the first nights next week." Tradition localises the great Doctor in one of the downstairs rooms, still a study, and which is said to be unaltered since his time. An old guide book says, "Residents in Kettel Hall are requested by the passing stranger to show Dr. Johnson's study." The paragraph has not found its way into modern handbooks, and fortunately for the residents, the now frequent "passing stranger" lets the bell alone. Forty years after Dr. Johnson's visits, the Right Hon. W. Wyndham and Mr. Malone, the celebrated Irish barrister, lodged at Kettel Hall, and occupied what Malone describes as "two chambers of severe simplicity." Malone adds, in one of his letters, referring to this visit, "Since then the house has fallen into a ruinous condition." Traces of this ruined state still remain in the shape of long cracks filled up with mortar. Some time early in the present century, considerable repairs and alterations took place; many windows were closed up, and probably small rooms thrown into larger ones. A lean-to passage was added to give more space to the room used as a dining room on the ground floor, and it became what was then termed "a commodious family residence." The present staircase (a very bad one) was then probably put in. There are in some of the rooms, small cupboards beside the fire places, which, judging from similar arrangements in other old houses, probably led to small stairs or rather ladders in the thickness of the wall, connecting the floors. There is one in the house occupied by Mr. Taphouse in St. Mary Magdalen Street, with a rope, by which to pull oneself up, and traces of another were found in an old house in Broad Street lately.

Some years after Dr. Kettel's death, some repairs were being carried out at Trinity College, and a small cupboard was taken down, which was fitted with shelves running in grooves, like the trays of a wardrobe, so that they could be drawn out. Behind these shelves was a cavity, and concealed here were found some canvas bags containing coins labelled and sealed "R. Kettel." The contents were handed over to Mr. Fanshawe Kettel, or his son. The Oxford workmen have preserved a tradition that more of Dr. Kettel's bags are concealed in Kettel Hall, and in a similar cupboard. The great peculiarity of the house is that on each floor

between the frontage and the back is an interval of twelve feet. This is partly an old chimney stack, but is partly unaccounted for. In the north wall of this space, on the top floor, is a cupboard with sliding shelves, now tightly stuck with many coats of paint. A round hole at the back of these shelves permits the insertion of a stick, and reveals that there is at all events on this floor a large space. Industrious research with a string and a hook results in fishing up dust and flue, and Dr. Kettel's bags, if here still, repose in peace.

The leases to Trinity College go on until the year 1834, when the house came into the occupation of Charles Wingfield, of the city of Oxford, surgeon. He carried on his practice here till about 1854. An elderly cabman bringing in a box one day, said he had last entered the house as a small boy to have a tooth extracted by old Dr. Wingfield. After his death his widow, Mrs. Wingfield, continued to occupy the house, and many people still in Oxford doubtless remember her.

In 1872 Dr. Stubbs, the present Bishop of Oxford, came to live here. We have seen that Dr. Johnson was working at his great dictionary during his occupation of the study, and there is no doubt that much of Dr. Stubbs' valuable work was done there, thus giving additional interest to the room. In his time the position of the house almost realised the ideal situation of "a cabstand in front and unlimited woods behind," as the garden joined Trinity Grove, and behind lay St. John's Gardens, and then open country. But when Trinity College decided on further enlargement they found it necessary to annex most of the garden of Kettel Hall, and for this end bought it of Oriel. Dr. Stubbs was in April, 1884, made Bishop of Chester, and Dr. Mee rented the house from Trinity. There were then bordering on the street an old stable and coach-house, curiously planned, as the coach-house doors opened on the street, so that all the harnessing and carriage washing must have been done publicly in Broad Street. These stables were turned into kitchens, the old kitchen being underground and cellar-like; and a new room was built on the site of some tumble-down old cottages, used as out-houses and wash-houses. A deep well was closed just to the right of the fireplace. At the top of the house, running over all the rooms, is a large floored kind of loft, broken up by the gables into compartments, but all open to each other. Curiously, in each gable from the outside can be seen a small blocked-up

window. In some book, I cannot remember where I saw it, I read an account of a kind of accommodation given to students in some of these old halls, and a description was given of top rooms or attics, in which each man had his own corner or niche for his bed, while the centre was common property. These students called each other "Chamber-dekyns" (some derive the word chums from this source), and is it not probable that this was the use of this loft in the early days of the occupation of the house?

There is only one thing further I can add, and that with reference to the panelling. That is partly new, but all along the east wall is panelling which we found in the cellar kitchen and in a dark cupboard below, then covered with yellow wash. Mr. Aveling, who wrote a paper on his fine old house (Restoration House at Rochester), for the *Strand Magazine* last year, and who has given much attention to panelling, dated it at once as between 1600 and 1620. The same pattern is found in some of the upstairs rooms, and it is no doubt of the date of the original building. Curiously enough, a short time ago, a lady living at Chipperfield Manor, Hertfordshire, showed a friend of mine some similar panelling, and said that it came originally from an old house called "Kettel Hall" in Oxford. I have received the information that Chipperfield Manor House was once in the occupation of some of the Kettel family, and that their arms are still to be seen there painted on some wall. The panelling in the study is much later, dating, I am told, from about 1697. The iron gates formerly fronting on Broad Street belonging to the entrance of Trinity College are now placed to the west of "Kettel Hall," dividing its small garden from the quadrangle.

STRANGE PEDIGREES.—Pedigrees are dearly loved in the City. The Lord Mayor, in his speech at the Mansion House banquet to Mr. Bayard, remarked: "We are here to welcome the lineal descendant of the great Bayard, of whom it was said, as it may be said of you, that he was *sans peur et sans reproche*. You, Mr. Bayard, are distinguished from being a descendant of an unbroken line of eminent ancestors." "Lineal descendant" and "an unbroken line" are somewhat definite, and we wonder where the Lord Mayor derived his information. Are the Ambassador and the Chevalier really connected?—A PUZZLED CORRESPONDENT.