

chef de œuvre is the Lavenham tenor, a bell remarkable for its thinness of sound-bow as well as for its peculiar acoustic properties.

Miles Graye died shortly after the siege of Colchester, in which his foundry was burnt down.

A comparison was made between the number of bells in Ipswich now and in 1553. At the present time there are 66. The total of the Commissioners' return in 1553 is 52, though their own figure is 51. This number arises from 49 in Ipswich, and 3 in Sproughton.

In Norfolk, the contrary result to that in Suffolk prevails, the number of bells having decreased, though there is considerable increase in the weight of metal.

After Dr. Raven's paper was ended there was an interval of twenty minutes for promenade, when the band played some selections, and refreshments were served, through the courtesy of the Mayor.

Mr. J. S. Corder then read the following paper:—

THE TIMBER FRAMED BUILDINGS OF IPSWICH AND THEIR PARGETTING.

During the Saxon era, wood was almost the only available material for building, and until the conversion of the people to Christianity, when they began to build churches, introducing foreign labour and talent, we do not find any real traces of art, nor could we reasonably expect it, they came as invaders to a despoiled country, and neither brought, nor inherited the arts. Most of the Roman buildings erected in Britain had, doubtless, decayed away and perished, during the previous wasting wars which ended with the final supremacy of the Saxons, and architecture, as a fine art, was blotted out till it was restored by other external influences. The conversion of the Saxons to Christianity led to the erection of religious buildings, and of these buildings the majority were constructed of timber, and though we have isolated cases in which stone was employed, yet we have many records which point to the former having been the most customary material. The first chapel, or oratory, at York, erected by Edwin, King of Northumberland, in 627, was of timber, and William, of Malmesbury, mentions a wooden chapel at Dutlinge, Somersetshire.

The Cathedral at Lindisfarne, 652, was said to have been entirely of sawn oak, covered with thatch; and in the neighbouring county of Essex, at Greensted, we have a church, parts of which exhibit remains of reputed Saxon work. It was built as a temporary shrine for the body of S. Edmund, and the walls consisted of solid trees cleft in two, and placed side by side, close together, the rough rounded exterior of the trees showing externally. But though wood was the principal material, yet it is manifest that the Saxons were acquainted with masonry, inference being drawn from the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, where he mentions of S. Cuthbert's Hermitage, "that he did

not build it with square stones, nor with tiles and cement, but with such materials as he could collect on the spot."

There is reason to believe that the art of brickmaking was never lost from the Roman occupation to the time when the Flemish brick, which is the form in which we now employ it was introduced. During the Norman period we find bricks used under conditions not reconcilable with the fact of their having at one time formed part of Roman edifices, and Flemish bricks occur in buildings in the time of Edward II., and at Little Wenham hall, in the 13th century. The fabrication of tiles was never laid aside, and it is strange, considering the favourable conditions for manufacture, that the art of brick-making should have been so long neglected.

The arrival of the Normans gave a great stimulus to building, and to art generally, and instead of the hovels of Saxons with their single rooms, built of wood and clay, no fireplaces, fires burning on the hearth and the smoke trying to escape through a hole in the roof, windows closed with wooden frames on which oiled linen was stretched, reeds on floor, and thatch on roof, massive castles arose in every direction, and "you might see," said William of Malmesbury, "churches rise in every village, and monasteries in the towns and cities built in a style unknown before. You might behold the country flourishing with renovated sites, so that each wealthy man accounted that day lost to him, which he neglected to signalise by some magnificent action." In towns where the houses were not individually fortified, we find wood almost exclusively used from the Saxon times to the 17th century. From the 13th to the 17th century design was little altered, and with the exception of the carvings which followed the changing tastes of the times, the houses presented similar features. The narrow façade with the gable end overhanging the street, was the general form, and in the important requisites of space and convenience were little superior to the artisans' cottages of to-day, which are in many things more commodious than the merchants' houses of the 15th century. Even in the 16th century Erasmus does not hesitate to ascribe the periodical distempers which made themselves repeatedly manifest in England to the unsanitary state of the houses with their defective ventilation, their fixed windows, and absence of chimneys, precluding a healthy admission of fresh, and exit for foul air. The compact plan of low contracted apartments, round a central hall, and no passages, the narrow front, and moderate elevation, are the leading features of town houses established in accord with our domestic habits, and pertinaciously adhered to during the lapse of ages, and even carried out in later times in buildings to which they are little applicable. So slowly were changes and deviations made in the plan and manner of building of town houses, that Stowe, the historian, especially remarks upon a brick tower, erected by Sir Thomas Champneys, as the first, and a wooden one built by another London citizen, in Lime Street, as the second, he ever heard of attached to a residence. He goes on to declare that he believes that

the infirmities of blindness and gout, with which their possessors are suffering from, are divine judgments, on their desire to overlook their neighbours.

The principles of construction of these early houses were founded on a sound experience, and the traditional methods of framing were rigidly adhered to, having been perfected, after much careful study and investigation. The method usually followed was to build up a foundation of brick, or flint rubble, to just above ground level, and these foundations were of a somewhat sparing nature; a long oak sill of large dimensions was then laid on this structure, and into this sill were framed oak uprights, about eight inches apart, mortised, and tenoned, and pinned with oak pins: on these uprights was framed an oak head carrying the joists of the floor above, which projected out over the wall below, sometimes as much as two feet; on the end of these joists another plate was placed, and the same construction was repeated up to roof, which latter overhung, shielding all the building. Nothing was better calculated for preserving a perishable construction from driving rain, hail, or snow, than the protection afforded by these overhanging gables, and this is the correct explanation of this picturesque feature in old houses, a feature which delights the heart of all artists, on account of the fine bold shadows that it gives. The framework being complete, and pinned and braced together, the spaces between the timbers were filled in with a coarse admixture of clay, and chopped stray, called dawb, plastered on to a core or framework, of willow withes with wattles intertwined. This construction was called post and pane work, a post then a pane, or panel, the posts and panels showing both outside and inside; the inside being sometimes decorated in colour, or distempered with patterns, or sometimes coated with a thin skin of plaster and painted with frescoes. The walls and framework were very strong, complete cohesion being obtained by the extraordinary care that was taken to frame every timber to those with which it came in contact. But one great defect existed—the joint between the oak and clay filling was never perfect, and unwelcome draughts found their way into the apartments, adding much to the discomfort of the inmates. Many were the plans resorted to in order to abate the inconvenience of this imperfection:—tapestry hangings, panelling with wood inside and outside, plastering inside, and finally pargetting all over outside, destroying somewhat of the picturesque effect of the houses, but materially conducing to internal comfort, Pargetting walls then, like most architectural effects, was the outcome of a necessity, and the desire to remedy a defect, and from somewhat humble beginnings it gradually developed till it became one of the most decorative features of the house. The term parget, now nearly obsolete, and only applied to the rough plastering on the inside of flues, is supposed to get its derivation from the Latin *paries*, a wall originally written pariet, and in old manuscripts is variously spelt pargetting, pergetting, pergening, and pargework. It was used in several senses; 1st. For plain plaster surfaces, to quote from Evelyn's diary, he says: "The

whiteness and smoothness of the excellent pargeting was a thing I much observed." The thin coat of plaster before used scarcely covered the irregular surfaces of the wall beneath; and we find another old writer saying, "I wyll perget my walles, for it is a better sight."

In the *Hormani vulgaria*, we have the various kinds of finishing plastering set down thus:—"Some men wyll haue their wallys plastered, some pergetted & whytlymed, some rough caste, some pricked, some wrought with plaster of Paris." Secondly, the term was also applied to decorative plaster, ornamental ribs, floriations, cartouches and figures in relief, or ornaments sunk on the surface, or formed upon it, in a smoother material to the rest.

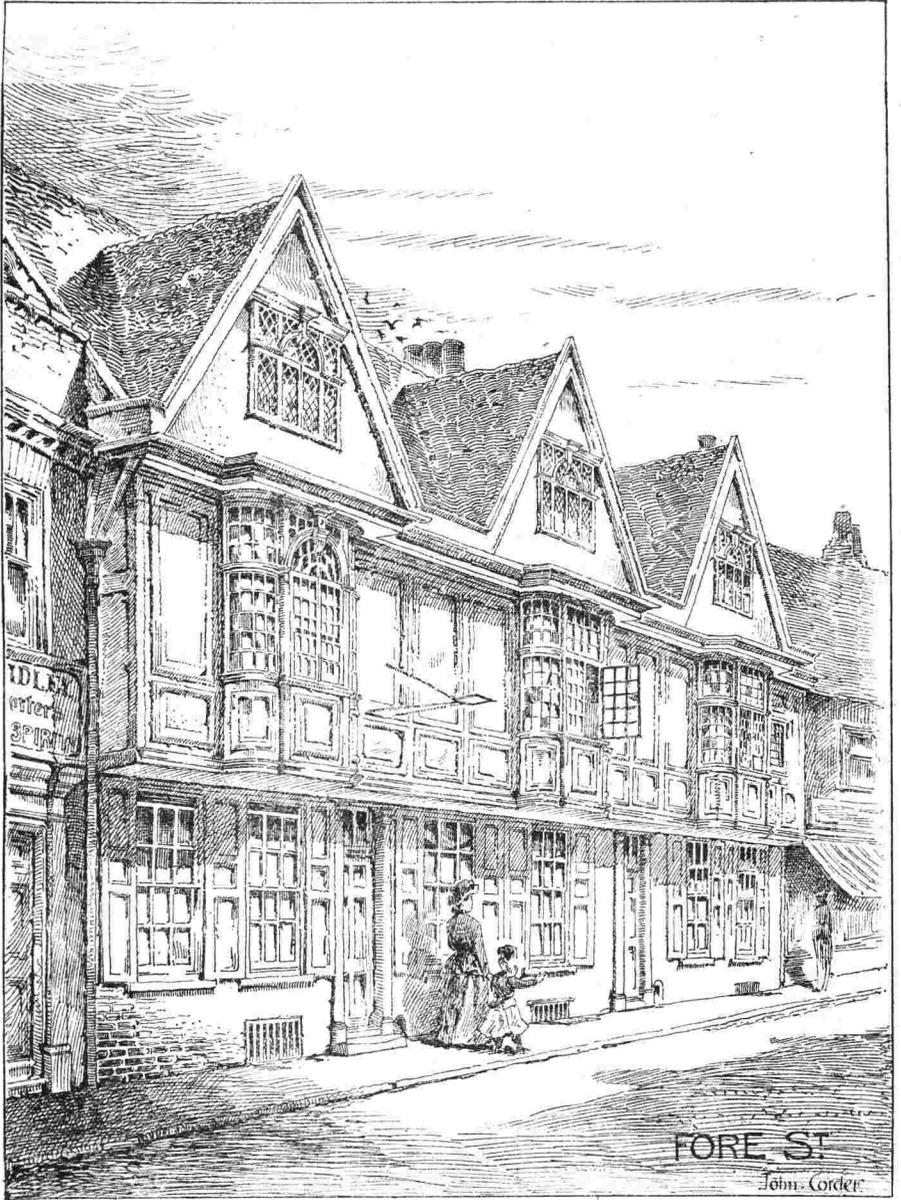
Sometimes the wall was panelled in wood, part of the height, and plastered above to quote from the survey of the Manor of Wimbledon, 1649:—"above which waynscot is a border of freet or parge worke wrought, having therein set eleven pictures of very good workmanship, the seeling is of the same, freet or parge work." The word was also used for paint, especially the paint for beautifying the face. Ben Jonson, in his *Epicene* referring to a somewhat faded lady, says, 'She's above 50 too, and pargets.'

It occurs also in a symbolical sense in Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, and in a book called the *Government of the Tongue*, a quotation occurs:—"There are not more arts of disguising our corporeal blemishes than our moral, and yet while we thus paint and parget our own deformities, we cannot allow any the least imperfection of another's to remain undetected."

Though it was during the reign of Elizabeth, and the succeeding Stuart reigns that ornamental plastering reached its highest perfection, and so many rich exteriors and elaborate ceilings were wrought, yet plastering in a measure was known in very early times.

Plaster of Paris, or Gypsum, was known as early as the 13th century, and plasterers, white-washers, and dealbatores were mentioned in the London Assize of 1212. But this early plastering was a mere pellicle or skin. White-washing was also a very early custom, and was not confined to wicked churchwardens after the Reformation. We know that Henry III. on several different occasions directed the Norman chapel in the tower to be white-washed. At the Coronation of Edward I. a similar office was performed at Westminster Hall, and when Newgate was repaired in 1282, plaster of Paris was brought to plaster the windows, and the chamber where the justices sit within, 13s. 4d. Sometimes our enthusiasm for the purity of purpose of the early builders receives a shock. They exhibited a marked abhorrence of joints, and the natural surface of masonry, and we find that it was also common in very early times to white-wash churches for frescoes, and to plaster church towers outside to preserve them, and to imitate stone angles on brickwork, and many other little devices that we are apt to think unworthy of the ancients, who usually built so well and honestly.

A good insight into the manner and process of pargetting is got



FORE STREET, IPSWICH.



SUN INN, IPSWICH.

by reading Harrison's *Introduction to Hollinshed's Chronicle* he writes thus of English houses, circa 1586 :—"Of chalke also we have our excellent asbestos, or white lime, made in most places wherewith being quenched we strike over our claye workes, and stone walls, in cities, good townes, rich farmers, and gentlemen's houses; otherwise instead of chalke (where it wanteth for it is so scant that in some places it is sold by the pound) they are compelled to burn a certain kind of red stone, as in Wales, and elsewhere. Within their doores also such as are of ability doo oft make their floores, & parget of fine plaster burned which they call plaster of paris whereof in some places we have great plentie, and that very profitable, against the rage of fire. In plastering likewise of our fairest houses over our heads, we used to laie first a laire or two of white mortar tempered with hair, upon laths which are nailed one by another, (or sometimes upon reed or wickers more dangerous for fire, and made fast here and there with sap laths for pulling downe) & finallie cover all with the aforesaid plaster." This is much the same process as is used at the present time.

Not only was it usual and customary to parget all new houses, during Elizabeth's reign, but many old ones that had survived, and were too strongly constructed to warrant their being pulled down, were cased in plaster, and dated at the time the plastering was done, giving an illusory idea of the age of the structure. An old house in the Fore Hamlet is thus treated, having two dates upon it, 1619 the date of the building, and 1786 on the plaster work. Sparrowe's House in the Butter Market, Ipswich, and the "Neptune" Inn, are similar examples.

A word about the various manner of ornamentation. A cheap and simple way was the working of panels, by running mouldings in relief, over the façade, as the houses in Fore Street, Bridge Street, and Soane Street. This is one of the earliest methods. Then, also, with a trowel to form ornamental panels, in sunk relief, as Brook Street and Fore Street: to cast ornaments and affix them, to stamp ornaments on wet stucco with wooden moulds, as the "Sun" Inn, Ipswich, and examples from various parts of the county; and, finally, the modelling of wet stucco in figures, foliage, and fruits, in high relief. This latter is the perfection of the pargeter's art. Where the ornaments were cast this was done in plaster of Paris poured into a mould. The modelling was done in stucco, the difference between the two being that stucco has for its base carbonate of lime formed from burning chalk: plaster of Paris is sulphate of lime, produced by burning gypsum, or alabaster. The former sets slowly, and can be modelled, and when dry withstands the weather. The latter sets quickly, and soon perishes by external exposure. For this reason the latter was only used for internal decoration. With the carbonate of lime for stucco was mixed, for strengthening and toughening, white of eggs, bullocks' blood, wax, wort of malt, and pitch. In 1571 the accounts for the repair of Newark steeple there is an entry: "6 strike of malt to make the mortar blend with lime and temper the same, & 350 eggs to mix with it, this to

seven quarters of lime." Now, in Ipswich, we have examples of all varieties of pargetting, though in some kinds the specimens are not so good as in other towns, yet we have one remarkable example in Sparrowe's House, Ipswich, commonly known as the Ancient House. Parts of this edifice date back to the 15th century, and within its walls are specimens of Tudor, Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Queen Anne, and the examples of each style are all good of their kind. The great feature, however, that impresses the ordinary observer is the pargetted front dating from Charles II. reign. This front has been oftentimes described, so it will suffice to say, that this pargetting, which consists of a great variety of subjects and ornaments, is skilfully done, though the details are coarse, and the anatomies peculiar. This plaster was evidently modelled on the building when in a semi-plastic state, and its good state of preservation speaks volumes for old workmanship and material. One of the secrets of the tenacity of old plastering was the large quantity of good hair that was mixed in. Owing to the modern system of tanning, good hair is scarcely obtainable.

In addition to the above modes of treatment, there was a method of impressing patterns, by passing a wheel, having the reverse cut on the cylindrical surface, over the wet plaster, and this was a simple and effective treatment, and moreover very cheap. Rough cast was the throwing of small stones and shingle against wet plaster, and letting them adhere, forming panels and bands, and sometimes the whole wall was treated in this manner; examples of this occur in the Fore and Back Hamlet of this town. Of panelled parget the old house in Fore Street, with three oriel windows, is the best example.

Very few timber houses in the town now remain unplastered, but the one recently restored in Carr Street, at the corner of Cox Lane, gives an idea of the appearance of a mediæval house, in its original condition.

Of plastered ceilings we have many examples treated in a widely diversified manner; here the ornaments were cast in moulds, and affixed on, and the mouldings run by means of a carved outline passed backwards and forwards, over the wet plaster, till the form was perfect. A very elaborate ceiling, and one little known, is in a house in S. Peter's Street, occupied by Mr. Murrell: here the beams are elaborately moulded, and garlands, flowers, and other enrichments profusely displayed. This is 17th century work. As might be expected Sparrowe's house contains several more or less ornate specimens: Jacobean on the first floor and Queen Anne below. The "Half Moon," the old house at the corner of Silent Street, and the houses in Fore Street, have all good specimens, the beams, which are highly ornamented; rising to the centre of the room from the walls. At the rear of the Mr. Hill's shop, in Brook Street, are the remains of two fine old rooms, with very highly decorated ceilings, the treatment being different from any others in the town: ribs forming geometrical designs cover the entire surfaces, and in the figures formed by the ribs the Tudor rose

and *fleur de lis*, are variously inserted. Time fails to enumerate every individual example, and a bare description gives little idea of the quaintness, ingenuity, and infinite variety of the designs with which these wealthy merchants of the middle ages decorated their residences. This essay has been necessarily short and imperfect, but if it has aroused a passing interest, its mission is more than accomplished.

Dr. J. E. Taylor finally gave a brief address upon the "The Saxon Road through Ipswich." The archæology of roads, he said at the outset, had been studied on one side only. Most antiquarians paid great attention to the great Roman military roads that ran through England, but few people had taken notice of what he might call the roads of the common people—those old country and occupation roads which were in many instances coincident with the boundaries of parishes that were of Saxon origin. Such roads had an antiquity of their own, running through all historic records, which were compelled to take acknowledgment of their previous existence; and from the evidences unearthed when the deep sewer was laid, he had come to the conclusion that Ipswich was a town from beyond the period of historic record, and that it was not greatly affected by Roman occupation. The one road through Ipswich would naturally run along the hill side between the "skirts of the forest" on the one side, and the marshes on the other. The existence of such a road from S. Matthew's Church over the Cornhill to Carr Street was demonstrated by the relics found beneath the surface, and in spite of the real or so-called Roman remains, which might be easily accounted for, he had no doubt this was in truth an old Saxon, and perhaps at an earlier period, a British high road.

At the close of Dr. Taylor's address a cordial vote of thanks was proposed in graceful terms by Lord John Hervey, and seconded by Mr. Alfred Wrinch. His Worship acknowledged the compliment, and the *Conversazione* terminated with the National Anthem.