

## HENGRAVE HALL.

[READ JULY 22, 1852.]

IN presenting myself on this occasion, and in this place, I feel that some apology is due. The history of this noble mansion, in which, by the kindness of Sir Thomas Rokewode Gage, Bart., we are now permitted to assemble, has been so fully written that any one presuming to treat of the subject again would be expected to add some new facts to a familiar history. But even this excuse I have not the power to offer. So minutely and carefully have all the curious documents preserved in the muniment-room of the family, and in the various record offices, been examined and illustrated in Mr. Gage Rokewode's "History of Hengrave," that nothing has been left to reward further research, or to need further elucidation. But, as it may be possible that the beautiful and curious book referred to may not be as familiar to the members of this Institute as it deserves to be, and as the history of Hengrave Hall is intimately connected with many personages who have borne a conspicuous part in the most eventful periods of the history of the country, I trust to be excused if I briefly cull from the pages of the historian such facts and incidents as may at once show how interesting and varied are the historical associations of the spot, and induce a better acquaintance with a monograph which succeeding authors will do well to imitate, but will find it difficult to surpass.

The manor of Hengrave having been held for two centuries by a knightly family which took its name from the place, passed by purchase to the Hethes, of Little Saxham, and then, in the 19th year of Henry the VIth, to Humphrey Earl of Buckingham, afterwards created Duke of Buckingham. He was married to the Lady Anne Neville, daughter of Ralph, Earl of Westmoreland, and was slain at the battle of Northampton. On the marriage of the Duke's third son, Lord Henry Stafford, with Margaret, Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry the VIIth, the Duke settled upon them,

among other estates, the manors of Hengrave and Westley. On the attainder of his nephew Henry, the powerful Duke of Buckingham, who it is well known was the principal agent in placing the crown on the head of Richard the Third, Hengrave was granted to Henry Lord Grey, of Codnor; but on the reversal of the attainder by Henry the VIIIth, it was restored to Edward, Duke of Buckingham, who built the extensive castellated mansion of Thornbury, in Gloucestershire. From this duke Hengrave was purchased by Sir Thomas Kytson, Kt., a wealthy citizen and member of the Merchant Adventurers Company of London. The transactions of Kytson were very extensive, particularly at the great cloth fairs or staples holden at Antwerp and other places in Flanders; and he held not only large estates in Suffolk, purchased on the dissolution of the Abbey of St. Edmund, but also in the counties of Devon, Dorset, Somerset, and Nottingham. The beautiful and stately mansion of Hengrave is a monument of his magnificence. At his death in 1540, Hengrave devolved upon his widow, who afterwards became the wife of Sir Richard Long, of Shengay, in Cambridgeshire, Master of the Buckhounds to Henry the VIIIth; and then of John Bouchier, Earl of Bath, a strenuous supporter of the cause of Queen Mary, who is said to have come to Hengrave on the eve of the dissolution of Edward VI., and to have been thence accompanied by the Earl with a considerable force to Kenninghall, the rendezvous of the Queen's devoted partisans. Her son, Sir Thomas Kytson, had the honour of twice receiving Queen Elizabeth at Hengrave, on the occasion of her progress to and from Norwich in 1578. Returning from Norwich by Thetford, says Churchyard, the Queen came to Sir Thomas Kytson's, "where in very deed the fare and banquet did so far exceed a number of other places that it is worthy the mention. A show representing the fayries, as well as might be, was there seene, in the which show a riche jewell was presented to the Queen's Highness." On this occasion the owner of Hengrave received the honour of knighthood. A walk leading from the park to the Hyde-wood, and marked out by old thorn bushes, is still called Queen Elizabeth's walk; at the hall, the Queen's chamber was long remembered; and in the State Paper Office are to

be found several letters on matters of historic importance, addressed by the Queen, Lords Burghley and Leicester, &c., from "the Court at Hengrave," to Sir Francis Walsingham, Ambassador in the Low Countries.

The second Sir Thomas Kytson died in 1602, and left Hengrave for life to his widow, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Cornwallis, of Brome, Comptroller of the Household to Queen Mary. Their eldest daughter, Margaret, was married to Sir Charles Cavendish, brother of William, Earl of Devonshire, a large sum having been given for the marriage by his mother "Bess of Hardwicke," the intriguing Countess of Shrewsbury. Hengrave formed part of the marriage settlement; but on the death of Margaret Lady Cavendish, a year after the marriage, without issue, it reverted to her younger sister Mary, who carried it by marriage to Thomas, Lord Darcy of Chich St. Osyth, afterwards Earl Rivers.

This marriage was far from proving a happy one. The Earl appears to have been a weak perverse man, careless of the affections of his consort, while the Countess, with a proud heart and masculine understanding, despised her husband. The parties separated by mutual consent, never again to come together, though both lived for nearly half a century after this unfortunate event. Of this lady there are three very curious portraits in the house. One of them, with the date 1617, represents the Countess with an air of haughty independence, her right arm *a kimbo*, and in her left hand a paper, perhaps the deed of separation, on which are conspicuously to be seen the emphatic words "IF NOT I CARE NOT." The attitude, the manner, and the language expressed, coupled with the blazoning of the lady's armorial bearings above her head without the impalement of Darcy, all indicate to the fullest extent the pride of her own feelings, as well as perfect indifference whether the Earl and herself were ever again to be united: *if not I care not*. There is also a miniature of Lady Rivers, painted when she was at a very advanced age, having, on a brass plate which encloses it, an inscription, taken from the 12th verse of the 26th Psalm [27th Engl. version], shewing that age had not softened her resentment for real or imputed injuries: "*Insurrexerunt in me Testes iniqui et mentita est iniquitas sibi.*"

The issue of this alliance was one son and four daughters. The son was the gallant "young Darcy" who acted as page to Prince Henry at the splendid ceremony of creating the heir of James I. Prince of Wales. He died at an early age, without issue. Elizabeth, the eldest daughter, married Thomas Viscount Savage, and during her widowhood King Charles II. granted her the title and rank of Countess Rivers for her life. The losses which this lady suffered in the civil wars exceeded perhaps those of most other persons, even of the Arundels of Wardour; and John Lord Rivers, her son, was excepted by name out of the indemnity which the Parliament offered in Lord Essex's manifesto.

Upon Penelope, the third daughter, the Countess Rivers settled Hengrave and her Suffolk property. It is said that Sir George Trenchard, Sir John Gage, and Sir William Hervey, each solicited Lady Penelope in marriage at the same time, and that, to keep peace between the rivals, she threatened the first aggressor with her perpetual displeasure; humorously telling them that, if they would wait, she would have them all in their turns—a promise which was actually performed. The gentleman first favoured was Sir George Trenchard, of Wolverton, in Dorsetshire, who, dying shortly after without issue, she married Sir John Gage, Bart., of Firle, in Sussex. By him, who died in 1633, she had nine children. Lady Penelope remained a widow till 1642, when she married Sir William Hervey, of Ickworth, grandfather, by a former wife, of John first Earl of Bristol. The lady survived all her husbands, and by her will, proved in 1661, settled Hengrave upon her third son, Edward Gage, who was created a baronet by King Charles the Second in 1662; a mark of royal favour said to have been conferred in acknowledgment of the services of his loyal kinsman, Sir Henry Gage, slain at Culham-bridge. From Sir Edward Gage, is descended the present Sir Thomas Rokewode Gage, 8th baronet; as the present Viscount Gage, of Firle, is the lineal descendant of his elder brother Thomas, 2nd baronet of Firle.

It will not be necessary to detail at length the history of the Gage family. It will be sufficient for the occasion to state that it has allied itself with some of the noblest and most ancient houses of England, and with the local families

of Cornwallis, Hervey, Jermyn, D'Ewes, Spring, Rokewode, and others; and that its members have served their country in honourable offices about the person and court of their sovereigns, and in the military and civil professions.

A most distinguished member of the family was Sir John Gage, K.G., who was Lieutenant of the Camp, jointly with Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, at the siege of Boulogne; was one of the Council of Sixteen appointed by the will of Henry the VIIIth to assist in the management of public affairs during the minority of his son; and, as Constable of the Tower of London, had the painful duty of attending his near relative, the Lady Jane Grey, to the block.

His grandson, Sir Henry Gage, was a devoted loyalist, and Governor of Oxford. He was killed in an attempt to break down Culham bridge, near Abingdon, being shot through the heart with a musket bullet.

The wife of Sir William Gage, the second baronet, was Mary Charlotte Bond, daughter of Sir Thomas Bond, Comptroller of the Household to Queen Henrietta Maria. Lady Gage was brought up by Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans; and a picture of her in the drawing room represents her offering a basket of flowers to the Duchess.

John Gage, son of Sir William, the second baronet, was one of the pages of honour to Louis XIV. He brought the Coldham Hall estate to the family, by marriage with the heiress of the Rokewodes.

Sir Thomas Gage, the sixth baronet, afforded in this noble mansion an asylum to the last lineal descendant of the Chancellor Sir Thomas More, when that venerable lady, with the English community of Austin nuns at Bruges, was compelled, by the breaking out of the first French Revolution, to seek an asylum in this country.

His eldest son and successor, Sir Thomas Gage, possessed a highly refined and accomplished mind, and the beauty of his drawings illustrating the churches of this neighbourhood, and the interesting details of antiquity contained in them, bear witness to his industry and zeal as an archæologist. His favourite science of botany occupied likewise much of his time; and the minute accuracy of his remarks, the care with which he recorded them, and the industry that he employed in perpetuating the recollection of the living

plants by drawings, are best known by those who are in possession of his notes and sketches. The death of Sir Thomas Gage occurred while in Italy in 1820, and he was buried in the Chiésa del Gesù at Rome.

To his brother, the late John Gage Rokewode, one of the most able and highly accomplished of antiquaries, the archæologists of Suffolk are indebted for two valuable and attractive contributions to the county topography; for the delightful gossip of the monkish Boswell, known as the "Chronicles of Jocelin de Brackland"; and for many archæological papers characterized by elegance of style, and deep and multifarious research.

It has been already stated that the house was built by Sir Thomas Kytson, being begun about 1525 and finished in 1538, at a cost of three thousand pounds, a sum equal to about 40,000*l.* in the present day. It is probable from the connection which existed between Sir Thomas Kytson and the Duke of Buckingham, that the Duke's newly erected castellated mansion at Thornbury might have suggested the plan for the house at Hengrave. The shell of the building within the moat was the work of John Eastawe, or Estow, who executed it after some model seen by him at Comby, a place of the Duke's, in Suffolk. The bay-windows, and probably the gate house, were the work of John Sparke, who, as well as Thomas Dyrich, the chief carver, and John Birch, the joiner, were artisans from London. Some of the freestone was procured from the quarries at King's Cliff in Northamptonshire, being transported, partly by land and partly by water, through Worlington and Brandon to Hengrave. The rest was supplied from the dissolved Abbeys of Ixworth, Burwell, in Cambridgeshire (not Burwell in Norfolk, as stated by Mr. Gage), and Thetford. The timber came chiefly from the neighbouring parks of Comby and Sowe, or Southwood, part of the possessions settled upon Mary, Queen of France, on her marriage with Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. Some of the lead was brought from Ixworth priory; and some, probably for the offices, from the monastery of St. Edmund, dissolved after the chief part of the mansion was finished.

By the removal in the seventeenth century of the outer

court, and, in 1775, of a mass of building which projected at the east and north sides of the mansion, together with a high tower, the house has been reduced one-third at least from its original size. The moat has been filled up : there was a bridge over it at the inner gate, figured with devices in polished flint work, and also a drawbridge communicating with the church.

The south front, the gate-house, and the inner court are rare examples of the domestic architecture of the time. Among the architectural peculiarities perhaps the most remarkable is the form of the turrets : those of the gate-house resemble the mitre-headed turrets of King Henry the VIIIth's chapel at Windsor ; of King's College, Cambridge ; of the east end of the choir of Winchester ; of the gate-house of Brazenose College, Oxford ; and of St. George's, Windsor ; whilst the others, without crockets or other ornament, remind us of the domes of the palaces and temples of the East. But it is in the gate-house that the Tudor magnificence is chiefly conspicuous. This structure, says Gough, is of such singular beauty, and in such high preservation, that perhaps a more elegant specimen of the architecture of the age in which it was erected cannot be seen.

The inner court, of fine masonry embattled, appears in its original state, and is distinguished by the bay window of the hall on the north side.

The interior of the house has little of its original character, but the windows and walls have much fine old painted glass, chiefly armorial bearings, and many original portraits. The painted glass in the dining room, formerly in Old and New Buckenham churches, is a most appropriate addition to the heraldry of the house ; and the arms of France and England on a quatrefoil of oakleaves in the small front chamber is a rare specimen of blazonry of the 13th century. The old chapel has a valuable painted glass window of twenty-one lights, representing the Creation ; the Fall of Man ; the Deluge ; and fourteen incidents in the life and death of Christ ; all of which are fully described in the History of " Hengrave." Among the portraits are those of Sir Thomas Kytson, the builder of the hall, by Holbein ; of Sir John Gage, K.G., the personal friend of Henry the VIIIth ; of

Elizabeth Lady Kytson, daughter of Sir Thomas Cornwallis, painted by Cornelius Janssens ; of Mary Countess Rivers, as already noticed ; and of Lady Penelope, her daughter, who brought Hengrave to the Gage family. There are also fine portraits of Charles the First and Henrietta Maria by Vandyck.

The House contains many objects of archæological interest. Amongst others, a fine silver gilt hanap, that belonged to Elizabeth Countess Rivers ; and a reliquary of rock crystal, with silver gilt enamelled stem, of the 15th century. This beautiful relic belonged to the family of the Marquess Caponi, of Florence, and was purchased there in 1835. A christening plate of pewter, with medallions of the twelve apostles. An ivory pax of the 14th century, with the adoration of the Magi curiously carved thereon. An enamelled triptych, of the 15th century, with the leading incidents in the life, death, and ascension of Christ. A very curious specimen of embroidery, being the fine lawn shirt that belonged to Arthur, Prince of Wales, son of King Henry VII., and which was given to the late Mr. Gage Rokewode by the Countess de Front, one of whose ancestors, a Bostock, was Lord of the Bedchamber to his Majesty. A small mazer or grace cup, with silver band, on which is engraved this quaintly expressed good counsel :—

Hold youre tunge and sey y<sup>e</sup> lest  
 And let youre neyzbore sitte in rest.  
 Hoe so mayye god to plese  
 Let hys neyzbore lyue in ese.

Many volumes of original documents, drawings, and church notes connected with the County of Suffolk, collected or drawn by the late Sir Thomas Gage, Bart., and his brother Mr. Gage Rokewode. A volume of Household Books of Hengrave, which supplied so many curious items to the historian of Hengrave ; and that fine Register of the Abbey of Bury, which was rescued from destruction by the care of Mr. Page, the author of the "Supplement to the Suffolk Traveller", and the liberality of Mr. Gage Rokewode.

Near to the house is Hengrave Church, which since its consolidation in 1589 with the neighbouring church of Flempton, has been only used as a place of interment for the family at the Hall, and has thus been preserved from



ruin, having constantly been kept in repair at their sole expense. It is a small edifice with a round tower and south porch. The tower, now completely enveloped in ivy, is the oldest portion of the building, though one of the latest edifices of the kind. Its diameter is larger than is usual in these peculiar towers. The south porch, which remains nearly in its original state, was built, as an inscription over the inner doorway tells us, by the de Hemegraves, at the end of the 14th or beginning of the 15th century, when the church was probably rebuilt by them. The embattled parapet on the south side of the church exhibits some interesting details. Upon one of the battlements are the arms in flint work of de Hemegrave, Argent, a chief indented Gules; on another those of St. Edmund's Bury, a crown pierced with two arrows; and on a third the monogram IHS in Greek characters between the initials of Mary and Joseph. From a fragment of an inscription still remaining, this ornamental work would appear to have been made by one John Hull, of London, and who may probably have been interred in this church. The fresco painting of St. Christopher carrying the infant Jesus, engraved in the History of Hengrave, has since been destroyed by damp. The monumental memorials are numerous. One to Margaret, Countess of Bath, and her three husbands, has the effigies of herself and Lord Bath, on an altar tomb, under a heavy flat canopy supported by six pillars, and that of Sir Thomas Kytson, her first husband, on a step in front of her tomb. A monument of corresponding form and size, but more elegant in design, has the effigies of the second Sir Thomas Kytson and his two wives. A mural tablet records the death and displays the effigy in a kneeling posture of Thomas Darcy, the hope of the noble house of Rivers; and a monument of white marble against the east wall has a finely sculptured bust of Sir Thomas Gage, 3rd Baronet. There are also several slabs of grey marble in the pavement of the church, bearing arms and memorial inscriptions of the Gage family.

SAMUEL TYMMS.