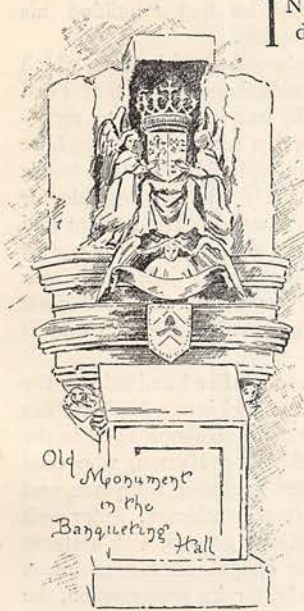


IN THE OLD PALACE OF CROYDON.



Old Monument
in the
Banqueting Hall

IN the middle of old Croydon, and behind the parish church, with its great elm-tree that is said to mark the grave of a Templar, there is a strange and rambling pile of buildings with a forsaken and dilapidated air.

The place is a curious medley of the present and the past. Its main feature is a large and lofty hall, built of grey flint, butressed with stone, and roofed with red tiles. But between the mouldering buttresses of this ecclesiastical edifice, the new chimney stalk of an engine-boiler shoots into the

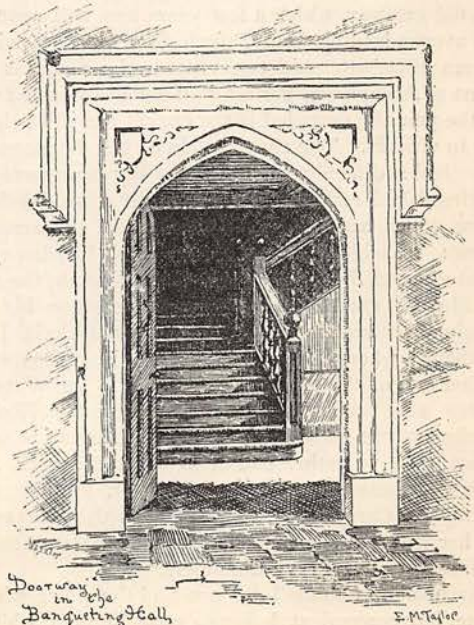
sky. A low range of ancient galleries of red-brick adjoining the hall have been turned into a residence, and fitted with an American verandah and its Virginia creeper. On the west end it abuts against a churchyard; on the east it is hard pressed by the playgrounds of the Board School and the trim little villas of the modern builder. But for the rest it lies between a grassy paddock, with a few scattered trees, and an old, deserted garden.

There is an appearance of neglect about the whole structure, which has evidently seen better days. The shutters are closed on the oriel windows, which still retain the traces of their former grandeur. The shrubs are broken down and drooping in the angles of the walls. The grass of the garden is thick and matted; the walls and borders are overgrown with weeds. That old Gothic archway, with its groined ceiling, once the principal entrance to the mansion, harbours now a brood of withered leaves and refuse. A lusty plant of ivy springs from the portal and battens on the crumbling stone. A desolate and leafless elder-tree, which grows beside it, moans in the wintry blast. The ivy, indeed, is everywhere. It overruns the plots of the garden, climbs into the laburnums, and creeps over the buttresses to the very top of the highest chimney. If it had its own will it would soon make a grave of the old place.

One would say that these abandoned tenements were part of an estate in Chancery; the buttressed hall, a ruin of some former priory or country church. It is not easy to believe them the remains of a famous residence, haunted with the memory of kings and mighty prelates, whose very names lead the imagination far back into the long vista of English history.

Yet so it is. A line of archbishops, from Lanfranc to Laud and Cranmer, dwelt in this place, entertaining princes, ambassadors, and even monarchs within these decaying walls, now so forlorn and misapplied.

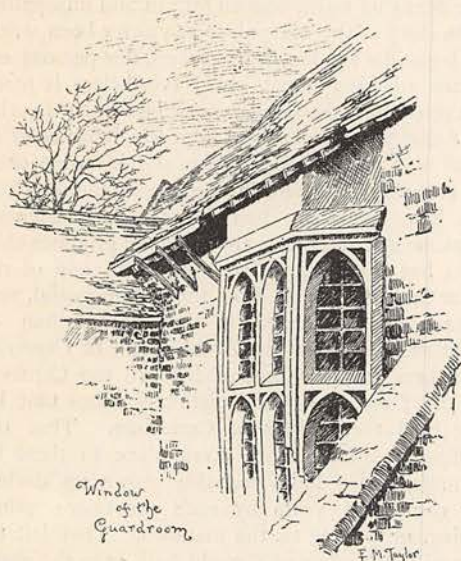
The story of the old palace has never been written, and, beyond a few local antiquaries, few persons seem to care anything about it. Nevertheless it mounts back nearly to a thousand years. The will of Beorhtric and Aelfswyth, which dates from 960, informs us that Elfies was priest of Crogdæne, and his rude church was probably built here in the Saxon forest. Ethelbert, King of Kent, had granted a residence to Augustine at Canterbury, and there the primates chiefly lived; but they had other homes, and one of them was at Croydon, which, from time immemorial, seems to have been annexed to the Metropolitan See. Tradition tells that the Archbishops of Canterbury dwelt there from the time of Edward the Confessor; and the Domesday Book distinctly states that Lanfranc held the Manor of Croindene. That older dwelling has long since given place to these later buildings, which have probably grown up during a long course of years by each successive primate altering, or adding to, the mansion. They left their arms on the corbels of the old hall, or in the stained glass of the chambers, which has all been removed. Otherwise there is little to instruct us in the history of the building. Archbishop Arundel, whose reign dates from 1397 to 1414, was one of those who resided here; and it was in his time that the unfortunate James I. of Scotland, captured by the English on his way to France, was kept a prisoner in the palace for many years. James was a poet, and probably beguiled his



Doorway
in the
Banqueting Hall

E. M. Taylor

durance by meditating couplets in the alleys of the garden, or by the banks of the trout-streams which meandered round the seat. For the springs of the Wandle flowed through the grounds, and one of them still flows under a culvert beneath the neighbouring street. There were fish-ponds, too, for the primate's



Window
of the
Guardroom

table, orchards and vineries, groves and pleasaunces, about the old mansion, which must have rendered it a sweet retirement to a man of literary tastes, even though he was a prisoner.

The learned John Fryth, afterwards burned at Smithfield, was brought here before Archbishop Cranmer, on July 4th, 1533, and, as we read, was "well entertained in the porter's lodge" the night of his arrival. That lodge has disappeared, and with it the old gateway, which a few years ago still spanned the avenue leading from Church Street to the palace. Queen Elizabeth paid two visits to the place as the guest of Archbishop Parker, and her bedroom, as well as the pew she occupied in the chapel, are still pointed out to visitors. The chamberlain of the day seems to have had a difficulty in bestowing her numerous and distinguished retinue, if we may trust to an old document, which appears to be a report of his arrangement: "Lodgings at Croyden, the Busshope of Canterbury's house bestoweth as followeth, the 19th of Maye, 1574. The Lord Chamberlayne his old lodginge. The Lord Treasurer [William Cecil, Lord Burleigh] where he was. The La Marquess at ye nether end of the great chamber. The La Warwick where she was. The Erle of Leicester [Robert Dudley] where he was. The Lord Admyrall [Earl of Lincoln] at ye nether end of ye great chamber. . . . I cannot there tell wher to place Mr. Hutton; and for my La Carewe here is no place with a chymney for her, but that she must ley abrode by Mrs. Aparry, and ye rest of ye Pryvy Chambers."

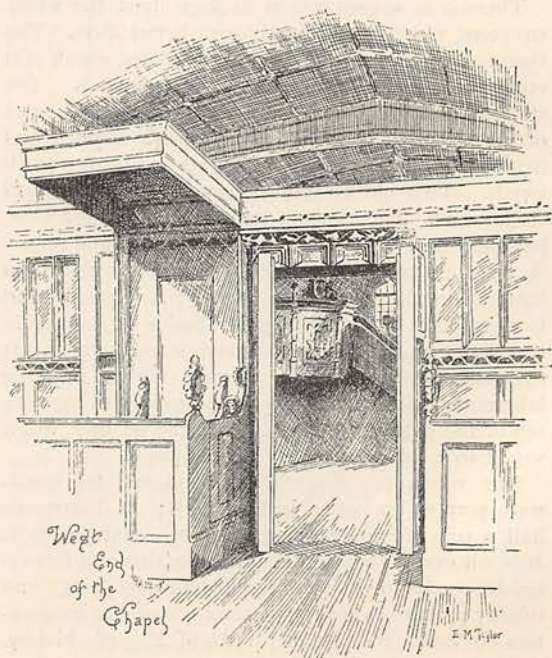
Archbishop Grundall did not find the place wholesome, but convenient, being so near London, whither

he often went on business, or "to seek some help of physic." Whitgift, however, was of a different mind, and loved "the sweetness of the place, especially in summer," as a retreat from business, and loved it all the more after he had "builded his hospital and school" at Croydon.

The house was then embosomed with trees, which were so thinned out by Archbishop Abbot that Lord Chancellor Bacon, riding by one day, failed to recognise it. He demanded of his servant "whose faire house" was that. The man replied it was "the house of Canterburie." Bacon said it was not possible, for his house was environed with wood. The servant told him the trees had been cut down. "By my troth," rejoined Bacon, "he has done very judiciously, for before [methought it was a very obscure and dark place, but now he has expounded and cleared it wonderfully well."

During the period of anarchy after Laud's death the Cheshire forces turned the chapel into a kitchen; but after the Restoration several archbishops lived in the palace, the last being Archbishop Hutton, who died in 1758. His two successors neglected the place, and it was sold, in 1780, to a private gentleman. Later on it became a laundry and bleaching ground, with a steam engine in the hall; and the chapel was turned into a day school. But, fortunately, for its preservation, the Duke of Newcastle has bought and presented it to the Church Extension Association, who, we understand, propose to restore it if the necessary funds are obtained. The Archbishops of Canterbury now live at Addington, a pretty village on the bounds of Kent, about three miles east of Croydon.

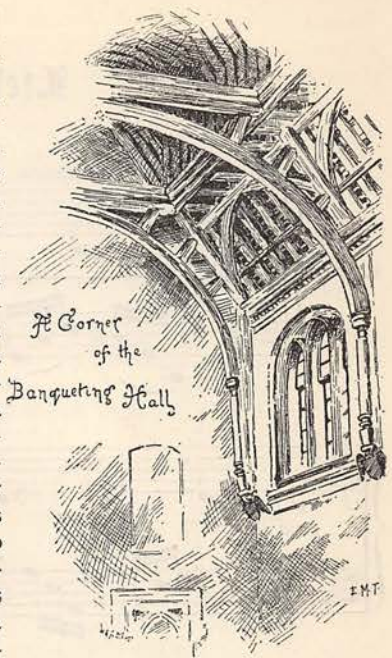
Our artist has pictured some of the most interesting bits of what still remains of the old palace. Besides the numerous bedrooms, which have nearly all been



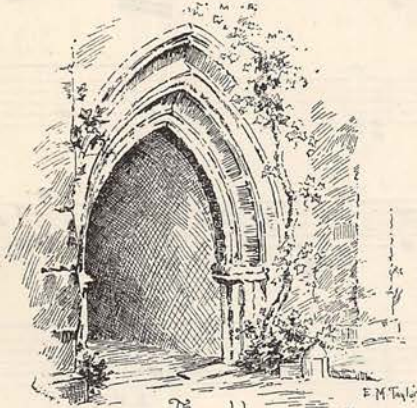
West
End
of the
Chapel

stripped of their oaken wainscoting, and the "long gallery," now occupied as a dwelling-house by the caretaker, but believed to have been a picture gallery, there are still standing the banquet-hall, the so-called "guard-room," a music gallery, and the private chapel. They are all more or less empty and dismantled, for the place has been in the hands of persons whose only thought seems to have been to turn its wood-work into cash, and the shelter it afforded to industrial purposes. Happily, the fine roof of the banquet-hall is yet in excellent preservation, as may be seen from the corner sketch, and the cleanness of the timbers, whether of oak or chestnut, seems to disprove the

oaken staircase towards the western parts of the building, where are situated the "guard-room" and the chapel. Certainly the so-called "guard-room" has been a fine apartment, and much more like a "withdrawing-room" than a place for soldiers. The antique window opens from its south wall into the grassy paddock, where, as we look out, a poor broken-down horse is



SE Corner
of the
Banqueting Hall



The old
Porchway

theory that it was once heated by a log-fire in the middle of the floor. Under the beams of the roof may be seen the stone corbels from which it springs, with the painted shields of the various archbishops, borne by the carved effigies of angels. A quaint old monument, which formerly stood in the eastern end of the hall, is now built into the western gable. The scutcheon shown under the crown bears the arms of Edward the Confessor, with its "cross fleury" and "five martlets" impaled with the fleur-de-lys of France and the three lions of England. It is believed to be the shield of Henry VI.

The door shown in the corner of the hall leads by an

slowly munching some wheaten straw. Through the music gallery, we enter into the old chapel, whose sacred character has preserved it from the hands of the spoiler. The wainscoting and the carved oak benches are still entire, and a little trouble would restore it to a useful place of worship. Luckily it was a girls' school which was kept here. Had the seats been occupied by boys it is more than probable the carvings, in the course of nature, would have disappeared. The stall with the canopy, shown in our illustration, is the reading-desk, but the sound-board is more modern than the rest of the screen. The Communion-table stood on a raised dais at the other or eastern end of the chapel; and behind the screen, through the doorway, the eye catches a glimpse of "Queen Elizabeth's pew," with an oaken staircase leading up to it. The occupant of this pew, which has certainly been reserved for persons of distinction, could overlook the screen and see the other end of the chapel.

VERSES FOR A BIRTHDAY.

FROM the fields that lie a-waving with the wheat
a fathom deep
In its golden raiment, heavy with the scarlet
flowers of sleep,
Through a lattice of wild roses comes the song of those
that reap.

Here, the shadowed woodland water in the dark pools
of its bed,

Where the soft green light of leafage on its breathless
face is shed,
Makes a pathway of cool picturings of sky and bough
o'erhead.

Let the sun fall on thy life, as on the cornland, fair
and free,
So with glimpses of blue sky above thy shadowed
hours may be,
Thy gladness all as sweet as is the memory of thee.

F. HERBERT TRENCH.