

MISTLEY HALL, ESSEX,

THE SEAT OF LORD RIVERS.

MISTLEY HALL, one of the seats of Lord Rivers, is situated on a pleasant eminence, about one mile south of Manningtree, in Essex, and at no considerable distance from the river Stour.

This manor, at the time of the Domesday survey, was held by the wife of Henry De Ramis, from whom it passed through several families, and, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, came into the possession of the Crown. Edward the Sixth granted it to Sir John Rainsforth, whose heirs sold it to Paul, Viscount Bayning; Anne, his grand-daughter, conveyed it by marriage to Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford, by whom the reversion was sold, about the year 1680, to Edward Rigby, Esq., from whom the present Dowager Lady Rivers is descended.

Mistley Hall, the principal part of which was built by the Right Honourable Richard Rigby, in addition to the family mansion, though far from the most magnificent, is confessedly as elegant a seat as any in the kingdom. The wing which commands the river Stour, consists of a suite of rooms, admirably constructed, and fitted up with corresponding taste. The drawing-rooms and parlours are adorned with a small collection of very capital pictures of the best masters—particularly Vertumnus and

Pomona, by Rembrandt ; a matchless Cuyp, a Gaspar Poussin, a Teniers, and the celebrated Woodman, from the more modern pencil of the inimitable Gainsborough.

He built a beautiful parish church on the banks of the Stour, which was constructed by Adams, so as to form a very striking and central object from the Hall. On the right of this, Mr. Rigby formed a spacious quay and store-houses, making Mistley one of the most complete little towns, as well as sea-ports, in the kingdom.

As Mr. Rigby was a person of some political importance in the last century, it may not be out of place if we bestow a few words upon him here.

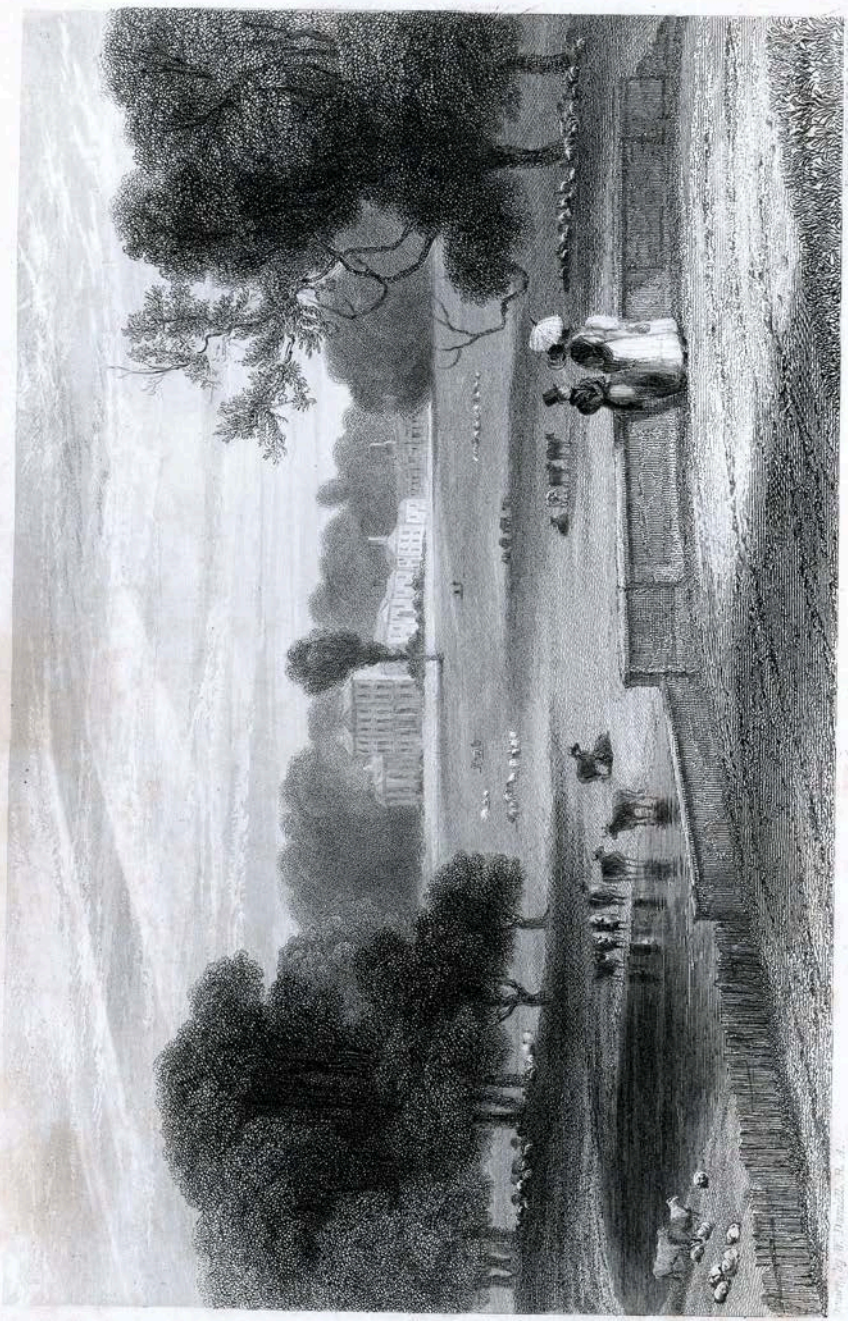
Embarked early in political life, with every advantage to be derived from strong, manly talents, and a winning address, it is no wonder that the leaders of the contending parties of those days were desirous of enrolling him under their respective banners. Frederick, Prince of Wales, father of George the Third, was amongst the first to cultivate his acquaintance. He personally invited him to his levees at Leicester House, and became so pleased with his society, that he gave him an unsolicited promise to make him, on the first vacancy, a Gentleman of the Royal Bedchamber. Such vacancy happening not long after, Mr. Rigby's well founded expectation was disappointed by a different nomination. He resented this treatment, however, in a manner worthy of him. The Prince himself was hurt on the occasion, and endeavoured to correct the mistake by the offer of a *douceur*, as a temporary compensation : but this was rejected in the following terms—" I shall never receive pay for a service, of which I am not deemed worthy ; but rather think it my duty to retire from a Court where honour, I find, has no tie."

He kept his word, and never entered Leicester House afterwards.

Mr. Rigby, however, soon afterwards was made Secretary for Ireland, and was subsequently nominated Master of the Rolls, and obtained a seat in the Privy Council. In June, 1768, Mr. Rigby, having taken no part in politics for some years, was appointed Paymaster of the Forces, and continued in that lucrative office during the twelve years' subsequent administration of Lord North. The American war, so calamitous in its consequences to this country, proved an unexpected source of wealth to Mr. Rigby: from the expenditure of numberless millions upon military services, so complex, and so detached, immense sums of the public money, according to official usage, were unavoidably lodged in the hands of the Paymaster. This accidental turn of good fortune subjected him, however, eventually to a prosecution, for which no precedent is to be found in the political annals of this country.

In this dilemma, he stated to Parliament his readiness to pay his balance by quick instalments. The country, as it were with one voice, applauded his conduct, and a compromise took place upon it, by which Mr. Rigby paid £10,000 for the interest of an unsettled balance, although no predecessor had ever been called upon on a similar occasion.

After this, Mr. Rigby retired altogether from public life to his seat of Mistley Hall, which owes all its present charms to his decorative taste, and nothing of the kind can more bespeak the hand of the master. The extensive plantations are all of his own creation. From an obscure country seat, annexed to a small patrimony, he raised it to all the consequence it now possesses, with a surrounding rental of £5,000 a-year.



Engraved by J. G. B. 1840

Mosley Hall

W. & A. G. B. 1840