HOLLINGBOURNE MANOR AND THE CULPEPERS.

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HOLLINGBOURNE MANOR is a noble pile although unhappily it is imperfect, having lost the whole of its original north wing by fire. No record of the date of the building has been discovered, but it may be assigned roughly to the third quarter of the sixteenth century. As built it was designed on the familiar Elizabethan E. plan, the projecting porch in the middle, with the rooms over it, forming the tongue of the E. The material employed is red brick. The greater part, however, of the quoins, copings, string-courses and hip-knobs, which look as though they were ashlar, is in fact of brickwork stuccoed over to imitate stonework. This stucco coating must be understood to be no change of more recent introduction, but an integral part of the original scheme of construction. The device, adopted chiefly in districts where local stone was rare or non-existent, is one which occurs not infrequently in the later middle ages, or indeed even earlier. The house consists of three floors, viz. the ground floor, a first floor and a second floor. The latter forms a kind of attic, with windows which in profile are obviously dormers, though their nature is less perceptible in elevation. Hollingbourne Manor, then, is not a hall-house, for the great hall extends upwards no higher than the ground floor storey, and has a flat ceiling. It is entered from the front door through screens, which bear a remarkable resemblance to those of Chillington House, now the museum, at Maidstone. The parlour, a room in the south wing, is lined with oak panelwork. Most of these panels are decorated in delicate gilt ornament of the period, a design which may be compared with one that occurs (not, however, executed in gold) in a house, now misnamed

the Priory, next door to Satis House in Rochester. "The upper floor," wrote C. J. Richardson, describing Hollingbourne Manor in *Studies from Old English Mansions*, (1842), "appears to have formed the guest chambers, the great room being up there. The whole of the walls are decorated with arabesque work in the style of Holbein, done in black outline on the white ground. The greater portion of this is now destroyed. Two shields of arms are introduced, one that of Moseley, of the Norfolk and Suffolk family."

North of the Thames there stands another house, which Hollingbourne Manor, though a smaller building, in many respects resembles, and may well be compared with it, especially with a view to estimating their respective dates, to wit, Eastbury House, Barking, Essex. The latter exhibits traditional characteristics distinctly more pronounced than is the case at Hollingbourne Manor. The most Gothic item of Eastbury, and one which is entirely absent at Hollingbourne is the polygonal stair-turret, or rather turrets; for, as originally built, and until shortly before 1814, when the eastern one, having been struck by lightning, was pulled down for its material, there were two turrets at Eastbury, one each in the re-entering angles of the three-sided south court. The western turret still stands, and contains the comparatively rare detail of a timber stair of solid oak steps, turning on a cylindrical oak newel. There was one such stair at North Bore Place, Chiddingstone, and there is at least one, if not more, at Penshurst Place. Whereas at Hollingbourne Manor the stairs are of a later type altogether. There the main staircase is comprised, on the fully developed Elizabethan plan of a well, within the building, and constitutes no structural feature in the external elevation.

As at Hollingbourne there is at Eastbury a certain amount of plaster or stucco applied to the brickwork, notably to the mullions and casings of the windows; but the chimneys at Hollingbourne are definitely plainer than at Eastbury, less richly moulded and without the ornamental spurs which enhance the neckings of the chimney shafts at Eastbury. In neither case has the date of erection of the house been

recorded, but to sum up, the above considerations indisputably prove Eastbury House to be of earlier date than Hollingbourne Manor, and incline one to the conclusion that Eastbury, from internal evidence, can scarcely have been erected later than about the middle of the sixteenth century, while Hollingbourne Manor should be assigned to somewhere about the year 1560, or not later than 1575 at the latest.

Everybody who knows anything of Kentish history must have heard of the Culpepers of Hollingbourne. The name Culpeper occurs so far back as the time of King John, (1199 to 1216), but the family has now, I believe, become extinct. The Culpepers, though not of high rank, were well connected, and the family during its long career came closely into contact with some of the highest in the land. One of its members, indeed, the Lady Catherine Howard, whose mother, Joyce, was a daughter of Richard Culpeper had the fortune, or rather, as the event proved, the supreme misfortune to become Queen Consort of Henry VIII. Her mother's family did not own, nor in the sixteenth century occupy, Hollingbourne Manor House, but another house within the parish, named Greenway Court, which lies away across the fields, a mile or so to east of the manor and the village church. Although the existing house of Greenway Court is of no particular antiquity it may be presumed to occupy the same site as the older one.

And now a word about Catherine Howard's paternal ancestry. As King James IV was the Scottish hero of the battle of Flodden Field, so on the English side were Thomas Howard and his son, Edmund, grandfather and father respectively of the Lady Catherine. After the battle of Flodden, which was fought on September 9th, 1513, the prowess of the young Edmund Howard was rewarded with knighthood at the hands of his own father. And, in recognition of their services to the Crown, the Howards were restored to the rank and title that had been forfeited by the loyalty with which the first of the Howard Dukes supported the losing side of the Battle of Bosworth in August 1485. As a younger son Lord Edmund was always miserably poor

and he fell heavily into debt. His difficulties were increased by the increasing number of his family, which became ten altogether and not least by the death of his wife Joyce Culpeper, who left him with several of their children, yet mere infants, on his hands. These combined circumstances no doubt explain why the little Lady Catherine was entrusted to the care of a relative, instead of being brought up at her own home. She was, to quote Miss Strickland, " principally reared in the nursery of her uncle, Sir John Culpeper of Hollingbourne, as the playfellow of his little heir Thomas Culpeper." Thus were sown the seeds of a friendship which was ultimately to prove fatal to the Lady Catherine Howard. Not many years passed before Lady Catherine was transferred from the Culpeper home at Hollingbourne to Lambeth, the suburban residence of her father's stepmother, Agnes Tylney, Dowager Duchess of Norfolk. This lady culpably neglected her charge. The moral tone in her household appears to have been shockingly lax, and at an early age Catherine was debauched by her music-teacher, one Henry Mannock. There followed an entanglement with a retainer of the family, named Francis Derham, with whom indeed Catherine is supposed to have entered into some sort of engagement of marriage. She subsequently broke off the affair of her own accord, but there were not a few persons who had observed what had been going on, and who subsequently knew too much, and did not hesitate, when the opportunity arose, to repeat their scandalous tale against her.

It was probably during her residence with the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk that Lady Catherine Howard first attracted the attention of the amorous King. Once seen, Henry VIII determined to win her, and was not content until she had been appointed a lady-in-waiting to the Queen of the moment, Anne of Cleves, whom he always hated, and managed to get rid of not very long afterwards.

Now it happened that Catherine's earliest play-fellow, Thomas Culpeper, of Hollingbourne, at that time was, or soon became, body attendant to Henry VIII, and a special

favourite with his master. Thus the two cousins could hardly help being brought once again into contact with one another, and renewing their whilom friendship, notwithstanding the difference in their respective positions—hers that of Queen and his that of valet—ought to have set up an insuperable barrier between them. The situation was dangerous in the extreme; for the king was so much older than herself, and so physically repulsive that it was impossible for Catherine to love him, while she did love the attractive and handsome young Culpeper, whom she saw almost daily. At the same time we are justified in believing that Catherine did not succumb to the temptation. She was very indiscreet in her behaviour, but no worse than that.

Not to anticipate, however, the exact date and place of the nuptial ceremony between King Henry VIII and Lady Catherine Howard are not known, but there is reason to suppose that it was celebrated at the royal residence of Oatlands Park in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, on July 28th, 1540, the very day on which Thomas Crumwell met his well deserved fate on Tower Hill. Anyhow, it is an ascertained fact that the Lady Catherine was openly acknowledged as Queen by August 8th following, only to lose her head on February 13th, 1542, on the selfsame spot in the Tower enclosure where her cousin and predecessor, Anne Boleyn, had been executed on May 19th, 1536.

It was in the autumn of 1541 that Catherine's enemies definitely conspired together to ruin her. Audley, Hertford and Archbishop Cranmer undertook to ferret out what they could to the detriment of the unfortunate Queen, but it was Cranmer who, in a note which he quietly slipped into the king's hand one day in October 1541, was the first to turn informer against her; and it was Cranmer who afterwards wheedled certain damaging admissions out of the poor child. For she was in fact scarcely more than a girl, if the reckoning is correct, which assigns her birth to about the year 1521-2.

The Queen was at Hampton Court when the fatal bolt fell. Thence she was removed to Syon House, Isleworth,

formerly a Bridgettine convent. Subsequently the unhappy prisoner was taken by water to the Tower, passing on the way beneath London Bridge, over the gateway of which the heads of Francis Derham and Thomas Culpeper, already executed on her account at Tyburn on December 10th, 1541, after their trial at the Guildhall, were then, according to the barbarous custom of the times, exposed to public infamy.

Torture on the rack had failed to wring any, even the slightest, acknowledgment of guilt from Thomas Culpeper, and he continued staunchly to maintain his innocence on the gallows. He was punished for a crime which, in the words of Miss Strickland, "there is no evidence to believe he ever committed." Similarly Queen Catherine protested to the last that after marriage she had never been otherwise than faithful to the king. She was condemned without a trial, being proceeded against by attainder in Parliament; and those who recall the ways of Henry VIII will rest assured that it by no means follows that because it was the king's will she should die, she really was guilty of the offences with which she was charged, for which she was convicted, and for which she suffered. She was beheaded on February 13th, 1541-2. Almost with her latest breath, when she had mounted the scaffold, she declared, "I die a Queen, but I would rather die the wife of Culpeper."