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The Owners of the Great House, Henbury, Gloucestershire

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THE OWNERS OF THE GREAT HOUSE, HENBURY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

BEING A PAPER READ BEFORE THE BRISTOL MEMBERS OF THE
BRISTOL AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY, ON
DECEMBER 14TH, 1910.

By LEWIS J. UPTON WAY, F.S.A.

WHEN John Barlow, the last Dean of Westbury-on-Trym, surrendered the College there to King Henry the VIIIth in 1544, the possessions and rights formerly enjoyed by its canons were granted by that monarch "To our beloved and faithful counsellor Sir Ralph Sadleir, Kt., in consideration of the true fidelity and acceptable obedience he hath hitherto shewn to us, as well as in consideration of a thousand marks." This grant, written on two skins of parchment measuring 22 inches by 32, is ornamented with elaborate scroll work, surrounding a portrait of Henry, clad in royal purple, seated beneath a canopy, in the midst of a group of courtiers. Its terms are comprehensive, bestowing on Sir Ralph and Elena his wife, besides the other estates of the College, "All and singular the messuages, lands, tenements, tithes, oblations, pensions, portions, emoluments, surrenders, services, profits and advantages with their appurtenances in Westbury, Henbury, Laurence Weston, and Aust."

Having dispossessed the canons, Sir Ralph converted their beautiful buildings into a country seat, which continued in his possession, and in that of his descendants, until the year 1675. The College itself remained intact up to the Civil Wars : its destruction lies at the door of Prince Rupert, who, fearing lest the enemy might take it and hold it as a position of strength, burnt it to the ground in July, 1643. Beyond a

tower and handsome gateway, nothing of its bygone glory now remains.

After King Henry's death, his successor, Edward VI, who had obtained in 1547 from Nicholas Heath, Bishop of Worcester, in exchange for other lands, the Manor and Hundred of Henbury, with the advowson of the Church and the Manor of Stoke Bishop, added these to a renewal of the late king's grant to Sir Ralph. At the same time Sir Ralph relinquished the tithes of Henbury to the Crown.

Sir Ralph Sadleir, born at Hackney in 1507, owed his prosperity to the influence of Henry's powerful minister, Cromwell, by whose aid he successfully steered his course through life in days when no man's head grew safe upon his shoulders, rising step by step until he eventually became the faithful servant and eager instrument of the king in plundering the religious houses. His royal master heaped manor after manor upon him by way of reward, until by reason of the wealth thus accumulated he was reputed the richest commoner in all England.

During the times of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth he was a Privy Councillor, wisely resigning that distinction while Mary and Philip reigned. King Henry named him in his will one of the regents of the kingdom during his son's minority. At various times he held the posts of Master of the Grand Wardrobe, Secretary of State, Ambassador to Scotland, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and was sometime guardian of the hapless Mary, Queen of Scots.

Living to the age of 80, he died in 1587, and lies buried at Standon, his principal seat in Hertfordshire.

The Westbury and Henbury lands and rights he left to his son, Sir Thomas Sadleir, who by his second marriage left a son, Ralph, and a daughter, Gertrude, married to Sir Walter Aston, Bart., of Tixall, in Staffordshire, afterwards created Baron Aston of Forfar.

Sir Thomas Sadleir died in 1606, and was succeeded by his son Ralph, who though married died childless in 1660, when

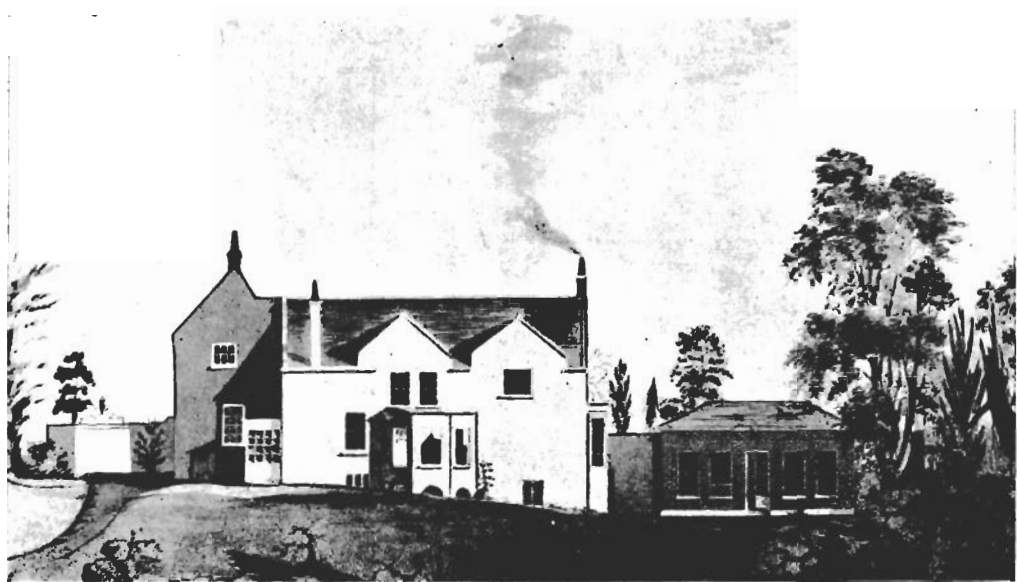
the estates went to his sister, Lady Aston, who in turn passed them on to her son Walter, second Lord Aston of Forfar, a Roman Catholic who, perhaps, fearing to hold Church property, began the process of alienation by selling a house and lands in Henbury to Mr. George Morse, which process he completed when, in 1675, three years before his death, he disposed of the whole estate of his ancestors in the neighbourhood to two dealers in land—Thomas Yate, of Gray's Inn, and Gregory Gearing, of Denchworth, in Berkshire—who in their capacity as dealers began to sell the same in small lots to the neighbours.

We are more especially concerned with the fate of the Henbury part of the estate, and in order to trace from as early a date as possible the history of the principal residence there, known as the "Great House," which sprang into being towards the end of the seventeenth and so completely disappeared in the early part of the nineteenth century, must turn to 1629, when from the first of a series of deeds at Ashton Court we learn that on

"October 1st, 1629, the Right Honble. Rafe Sadleir leased for lives to Elizabeth Atwoode, relict of Robert Atwoode alias Woode, and to George Morse of Tockington in Alveston, a farm in Henbury salt marshe, consisting of a messuage, barns, stables, outhouses, garden, orchard, and yard, in all one acre and a half, Goulsbury one and a half acres, Little Mead four acres, Broadland's Furlong two and a half acres, the two Stile Acres, ten acres, Ison's Hill, ten acres, certain meadows in Abeltram, three acres and one acre in Commonfield, of which the said Elizabeth was seized at the death of her husbande according to the custom of the manor of Henbury."

From a receipt on the back of this deed we gather the nature of the relationship about to exist between George Morse and the widow Atwoode.

"Memorandum. That the 30th daie of Marche A.D. 1630 and in the sixth year of the raigne of King Charles, the within named Elizabeth Atwoode and George Morse *now her husbande*



paid unto the receaver of Rafe Sadleir, Esq., the sum of £50 lawful English money which is the half sum named in the consideration of their deede. I say received to the use of the said Rafe Sadleir by me, Richard Chamberlain."

George Morse is said to have been son of a certain William Morse. He bore for arms: "Argent two bars sable, charged with 3 cross crosslets, 2 and 1 or; in chief 3 escallop shells." Elizabeth, his wife, widow of Robert Atwoode, was daughter of Richard Penfold, of Minchinhampton. The Henbury register supplies the following detail: "Robert Atwoode, yeoman, was buried May 21st, 1629."

Having in accordance with the above deed secured a house with some thirty-three acres of land in Henbury for a term of years, and incidentally a wife, George Morse rested content for twenty-three years, when under date

November 24th, 1653, I find a deed by which Ralph Sadleir leases to him for lives the messuage and half yard lands in Henbury. This is, perhaps, a renewal of the former grant. Next on

October 1st, 1661, Ralph Sadleir leases to him for lives certain grounds called "The Gastons," eighteen acres, and two parrockes adjoining, four acres. This is in addition to his original holding. Lastly, on

October 23rd, 1665, Walter, 2nd Lord Aston of Forfar, agrees to sell to him all the above premises.

George Morse's house stood on a piece of ground now an orchard, on the right-hand side of the main road which runs from Bristol through Henbury, at its junction with the cross-road leading from Henbury Church to Cribbs Causeway and Compton Greenfield (this latter road in the memory of my grandmother was a grass-grown lane). Up to the present time all who have given a thought to the history of Henbury have been under the impression that it was the original manor house. This supposition can be no longer entertained, since I have found another series of deeds dealing with a separate estate explicitly styled the manor. The first reads thus:

“ October 7th, 1653. Ralph Sadleir leased the Capital messuage or Scite of the Manor house to Edward Capell, merchant of Bristol, for lives together with the Court Hay, the Furlongs with a little Ragge and the Demesne lands belonging unto the College of Westbury, the Four Acres, two acres by Jordan's Grove, a Ragge upon the knoll by Pen Park, two acres at Burywall, Greenhill alias Shepherd's Close, the land late belonging unto John Watts, his house now the school house, the Two Furlongs, two acres adjoining Wamp-hill and Blaze Hill with common for thirty sheep.”

So we learn that in 1653 Edward Capell, and not George Morse, held possession of the manor house of Henbury, the history of which as given by the Ashton papers we are able to trace from owner to owner.

October 1st, 1660, Ralph Sadleir leased the above for a further term of 21 years to Edward Capell.

June 6th, 1665, Edward Capell granted to his son Francis the above during the term he held it for.

May 24th, 1666, Edward Capell further assigns the above for the term he holds it for to Sir Henry Creswick and Joseph Creswick.

February 22nd, 1670, Joseph Creswick and Francis Capell sell the above for the term they hold it for to Edward Capell, W. Peachy, and Gerrard Lloyd.

December 14th, 1682, Edward Capell assigns the above for the above term to Sarah Knight for the better securing to her of sums of money borrowed.

September 30th, 1684, Sarah Knight makes over the same premises for the above term to her daughter, Sarah Knight.

October 11th, 1687, Mr. Creswick and Mr. Capell assign the above premises for the above term to Sir Samuel Astry for £326.

July 10th, 1694, Elias Rich and Sarah, his wife (formerly Sarah Knight) assign to Mr. Rose in trust for Sir Samuel Astry the above premises for the above term for £126.

It afterwards became the property of Sir Samuel Astry by purchase outright from Yate and Gearing or their heirs, as later on we find it in the possession of his grandson.

The parish register tells us that "Edward Capell, gent., was buried on June 6th, 1681," so that the Edward Capell who assigns the manor house in 1682 to Sarah Knight is probably his son.

His monument, with Latin inscription wherein he is described as "late citizen and merchant of Bristol," still exists in Henbury Church. He bore for arms: "Chequy, or and azure, on a fesse gules, 3 lozenges argent."

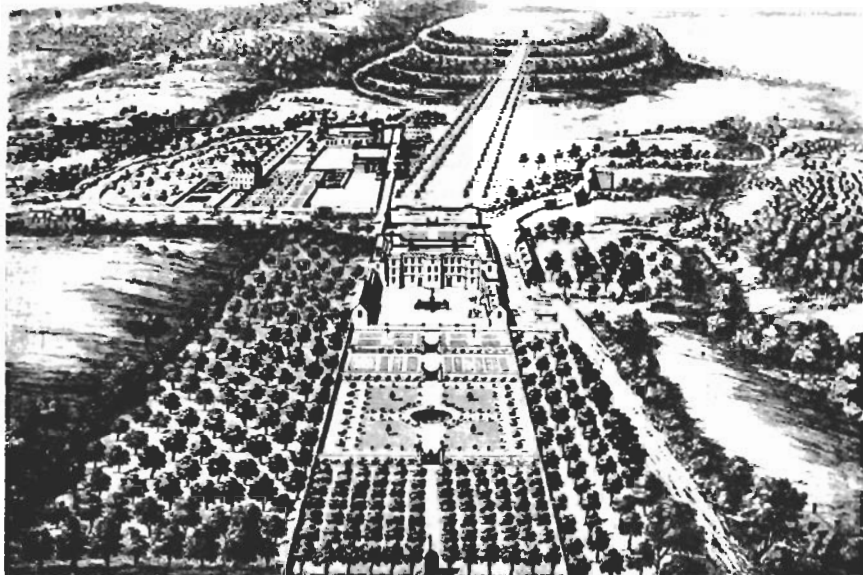
I am anxious to determine the precise situation of the house which Ralph Sadleir in 1653 so explicitly calls the manor house. We have seen that it could not have been George Morse's house, afterwards known as the Great House, Henbury Awdelett, now known as the Manor House—the picturesque mansion of the Sampson family was not built till 1688, which date has been found carved within it. Since the many less important houses which exist in and around Henbury—with the exception of Westmoreland Farm, then belonging to the Fane family—were not dreamt of, we are forced to turn our attention to the only one of any importance left, namely the old house which stood very close to where Blaise Castle stands at present. All indications point to this having been Edward Capell's house, and therefore the original manor. In default of any evidence to the contrary, I intend to assume that it was so.

Let us now glance at the domestic history of the Morse family. We have already seen that in 1630 George Morse married Elizabeth, widow of Robert Atwoode, of Henbury. This union was blest with but one child, a daughter, named Elizabeth after her mother. Her baptism is not recorded in the register, nor do we know anything of her early years. Being an only child and her parents' sole heiress, she was a prize in the matrimonial market, for her father, in addition

to the estate we have been considering, owned property which brought him in between four and five hundred a year, no mean fortune in those days.

George Morse left by his will, dated August 15th, 1688, half his rents to his widow and half to his daughter, the whole after his widow's death to pass to his daughter and her heirs. His name does not appear in the register amongst the burials, nor can Henbury show his tomb. He doubtless died and was buried away from home. His daughter married a barrister, Mr. Samuel Astry, a member of Lincoln's Inn and a rising man in his profession. Born in 1632, second son of Luke Astry and grandson of George Astry, of Eaton Soccon, in Bedfordshire, Samuel was sixth in descent from Sir Ralph Astry, Lord Mayor of London in 1493. The Astry arms are : "Barry wavy of six arg. and az., on a chief gules 3 bezants with a crescent for difference."

Of the cause that first brought him to this neighbourhood we are ignorant, and can only surmise that professional business was the reason of his coming to Bristol, and that while there he heard of a bargain in land to be sold in the parish of Henbury, for it is certain that in the year 1662 he purchased the manor of Aust from John Browning, Esq. Presumably from the time of acquiring this property forward to the time of his marriage, he paid occasional visits to Henbury, during the course of which he became acquainted with the fair Elizabeth, and proceeded to fall in love, either with the charms of her person or the depth of her pocket. His suit meeting with no opposition from the lady's father prospered, and they were duly married in 1667. History tells us very little of Mr. Astry's career as a barrister. He was evidently a capable and learned exponent of the law, for in 1677 his abilities were rewarded with the gift of the lucrative and important post of Clerk of the Crown in the Court of King's Bench, which he continued to hold for twenty-seven years, in fact, up to the day of his death. We have no evidence to tell us in what year he commenced to



build the Great House—whether he waited for his father-in-law's death, or began it in his lifetime is a matter of opinion. I have been asked the question why should not George Morse have built the house and have left it to his daughter. To that I have two answers: First, it was by far too large a residence for a man whose income was in the neighbourhood of £500 per annum; secondly, Sir Samuel's daughter, speaking of it in her will, expressly calls it her father's seat, whereas had George Morse built it she would have called it her grandfather's seat. I am therefore of opinion that Mr. Astry, waiting until his father-in-law was dead, pulled down the old and constructed the new house upon the same site. I hoped that the parish rate-books would have thrown some light upon the question, but upon examining them found none earlier than 1714. Two views of Henbury as it appeared to the eyes of J. Kip are contained in Sir Robert Atkyn's *History of Gloucestershire*, published in 1712. These give us the idea of a considerable country house with appropriate surroundings, stables, outbuildings, gardens and orchards. The gardens—laid out in the stiff style so popular in the seventeenth century, adorned with fountains, clipped hedges and straight walks—were of some size: handsome wrought-iron gates, evidence of good taste on the part of the builder or his architect, gave access to and divided them one from another. The house faced south towards Henbury Awdelett and the church. On the north it was bounded by a courtyard and the gardens, on the east by a large orchard, on the west by the Compton Road, across which appeared a row of cottages or farm buildings, where Henbury Lodge stands to-day. Two curious erections shaped like pepper-boxes flanked the entrance gate. These were probably the best and worst summer houses. From the gate ran a great double avenue of elms, terminating in a third summer house built on the slope of Blaise Hill. Two large gates cut off the farther end of the avenue, the course of which can still be traced by means

of a veteran tree surviving here and there. Seven were sacrificed when Blaise Castle house was built.

In course of time Mr. Astry became a large landowner.

On October 19th, 1675, Yate and Gearing sold to him in fee for £400 all those seven fields in Henbury called the "Dyot Grounds," forty-five acres, and the "Gastons," five acres. Yate's receipt for the money appears on the back of this deed.

In 1680 he bought the remainder of the Sadleir-Aston estate from Yate and Gearing. The Manor and Hundred of Henbury, with the advowson of the church, the Manor of Westbury and Stoke Bishop, but not the site of Westbury College. Included in this purchase was the Lordship of Durdham Down. At various times he bought the Manor of Westerleigh and lands in Iron Acton and Pucklechurch. At Westerleigh he opened up coal mines, the profits of which largely augmented his income. They are worked up to the present day.

On December 8th, 1683, he was knighted by King Charles II at Whitehall.

On March 15th, 1687-8, Henry, Duke of Beaufort, Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, appointed him Deputy-Lieutenant of the county. He took the oath before Christopher Cole, a Justice of the Peace, resident in the locality (Charlton).

In 1688 he was present in his official capacity as Clerk of the Crown at the trial and acquittal of the seven bishops.

Sir Samuel and Lady Astry had two sons and four daughters, who, with the exception of one by name Anne, were baptised at Henbury. I copy the entries relating to them from the register :

1. Elizabeth Astry, daughter of Samuel Astry and Elizabeth his wife, baptised September 30th, 1669.
2. Diana Astry, daughter of Samuel Astry, Esq., baptised January 2nd, 1670-1.

3. Luke Astry, sonne of Samuel Astry, Esq., and Elizabeth his wife, baptised June 22nd, 1673.
4. St. John, sonne of Samuel Astry and Elizabeth his wife, baptised June 22nd, 1675.
5. Anne (baptised elsewhere).
6. Arabella, daughter of Sir Samuel and the Lady Elizabeth Astry, baptised July 24th, 1684.

Of this family, the daughters all married well, while the sons died bachelors. I will deal with the daughters and their marriages first. Anne Astry found a husband in the person of Mr. Thomas Chester, of Knole, co. Gloucester. The register says: "Thomas Chester, Esq., and Madum Anne Austray were married March 16th, 1692." We know nothing of this lady beyond the fact that she had seven children, died in giving birth to the last, and was buried at Almondsbury on August 6th, 1703. Her husband did not long survive her, being buried in the same vault on February 26th, 1704-5.

The eldest daughter, Elizabeth, next left the paternal roof, her choice falling on a Somersetshire baronet, Sir John Smyth of Long Ashton, who was doubly connected with Henbury, first as owner of an estate in the parish called Elmington, which his family had held since 1586; secondly, through his relationship to the owners of Kingsweston, which up to the year 1680 had been the seat of Sir Humphrey Hook, whose wife, Florence, daughter of Thomas Smyth, of Long Ashton, was aunt to Sir John. After Sir Humphrey's death, Kingsweston was sold by his executors to Sir Robert Southwell. The register tells us that Sir John Smyth, of Ashton, and Madum Elizabeth Astray were married in the parish church of Henbury on August 11th, 1692. No marriage could have turned out more happily. Sir John, mindful of his duties as a country gentleman, took his share in regulating the affairs of his county, neglecting neither politics nor sport. His wife, in the course of time mother of a large family, found ample occupation in the care of her children and the management of a great household.

Together they spent twenty-three happy, uneventful years, which came all too soon to a close with the death of Lady Smyth in 1715. Her widower, heartbroken at his loss, has left inscribed in the family Bible the following most touching testimonial of his affection for his wife: "Sept. 15th, 1715. It pleased God out of His infinite mercy to take to Himself my most dear wife after a painful sickness that lasted her five months. She was one of the very best of wives, the best of mothers, the best of friends, and the best of Christians. She has left me and her eight children behind her, who can never condole enough the loss of such a wife and such a mother, and one that left such a bright example of piety and vertue, and everything that's praiseworthy for us to follow."

The two younger daughters did not find husbands till after their father's death. Diana was married at Lincoln's Inn Chapel in London on December 17th, 1708, to Richard Orlebar, Esq., of Hinwick, in Bedfordshire. She was of a festive turn of mind; the menus of several dinner parties at which she was present have come down to us, copied by her, no doubt, for future use. She died on September 4th, 1716, leaving several children, and is buried at Puddington, in Bedfordshire.

Arabella, youngest of the sisters by many years, made the last and most brilliant match. She was married, by special licence dated July 9th, 1715, to Charles William Howard, Lord Walden, afterwards seventh Earl of Suffolk.

Having briefly outlined the history of the four daughters, I must now turn to that of the two sons, Luke and St. John. Their lives, I regret to say, were far different—extravagant, idle, intemperate and vicious, they might well, like the offspring of the high priest of old, have been termed "sons of Belial."

Luke Astry, the elder, was sent by his father to Oxford, where he matriculated at Hart Hall, but left the University without taking a degree. The reason why we learn from

Richard Goodlad, Sir Samuel's servant, who, in his evidence in a lawsuit, sets forth the following story:—"That he had often heard Sir Samuel Astry, before making his will, complain of Mr. Luke Astry's extravagance in spending a great deal of money at Oxford, where he was placed to study, and of his lewd and vicious life, his son's tutor having sent him several letters to acquaint him thereof, and to desire him to take his son away from the University, for he was sure he would debauch all the youth of the College or Hall where he was. And after the said Luke was come to town he led a very loose life, and one night in particular he remembered he was much in drink, and lying over his father's bedroom made such a noise as occasioned his father to come up to his chamber, and asking him the reason of his making such a noise, he replied they would not let him have any drink, whereupon his father, saying he had too much already, ordered the witness to undress him and put him to bed, his father having before desired him to be quiet and undress himself and go to bed, which the said Luke refused to do. The witness thereupon offering to undress him, he struck him, at which Sir Samuel was very angry, and took him by the collar and shook him, and gave him a box of the ears, upon which Luke struck his father, and his father went away, ordering the witness to stay and see him go to bed, and in a good while after he did go to bed. The next morning Sir Samuel reprimanded him for being in drink, but his son justified himself that he was sober, and very well knew what he did, at which his father was highly provoked, asking him if he justified striking his father, and soon after made a new will, to which this deponent was a witness, whereby it was believed he had disinherited his son, who soon after told the witness that now his father had done his business, for he had disinherited him. The witness further added that Luke Astry did lead so disorderly a life that his father turned him out of his house, and put him into lodgings, and afterwards chambers at Lincoln's Inn were agreed to be bought for him, his father desiring he should

study the law. Money for the purchase of these chambers to the amount of £80 was given to the said Luke, who, with his brother St. John, being then come up to town with Mr. Gotley, of Bristol, to whom he was bound apprentice, in a few days extravagantly spent all the money, at which Sir Samuel was very angry."

Luke escaped the punishment of disinheritance intended by his father by early reaping the harvest of his wild oats—sickness and death. He died in his father's lifetime on May 7th, 1701, aged only twenty-eight, and is buried at Aust.

On June 10th, 1703, Diana Astry tells us a dinner party took place at Henbury, at which were present "Mr. Rolles, Sir John Smyth and my sister, my sister Chester and Captain Price. We had for dinner :

A Supe
A Coople of Green Gease
A Leg of Mutton Rosted
A Dish of Cherry and Gooseberry Tarts
A Dish of Whip Sulebubs
A Custard Pudding."

In the same year a most interesting entry was made in the parish register, recording the damage caused by a storm :—

"Memorandum. That on the 27th of November, 1703, between five and six of the clock in the morning, the tyde broke in and drowned all the marsh, near five foot high. It swept away some of ye fishermen's houses, and drowned the inhabitants of 'em. Abundance of cattle perished in ye water, and several hundreds of sheep. The tempest was so great that it blew down steeples, uncovered houses, and rooted up most of ye great trees, especially ye high elms, with a great deal more of damage."

Sir Samuel Astry's daughter Anne, Mrs. Chester, died in August, 1703, leaving six young children : the seventh was buried with her.

About a year later Sir Samuel was gathered to his fathers,

in the seventy-second year of his age. He was buried at Aust, where his monument may still be seen. The register says Sir Samuel Astry, Knt., was interred 3rd of October, 1704.

His will dated March 2nd, 1698, he never altered, though two of his children, Luke and Mrs. Chester, had died since the signing of it. The principal points are as follows :—

“ His body to be buried in his vault in the chancel of Aust church. To Sir John and Lady Smyth he leaves £100 for mourning ; to Mr. and Mrs. Chester £50. To his elder brother, Luke Astry, Esq., £100. Annuities to servants. His wife to pay to his two unmarried daughters £6,000 a piece on their marriage, provided they marry with her consent signified in writing. His eldest son, Luke, is cut off with a thousand marks a year, while St. John the younger gets only 400 marks a year. His wife Elizabeth to be his residuary legatee and sole executrix.”

I am now able to answer a question which has often been asked, namely, why Sir Samuel, leaving a surviving son, left the whole of his property, real and personal, to his widow, by giving the following account of St. John as sworn to by witnesses in 1705. He seems to have resembled Luke in want of character, possessing even less intelligence than his brother, as we gather from a remark made later on by Sir Samuel, who evidently did not suffer fools gladly.

Immediately after his father's death he served notices on his tenants, advising them that his father's will was invalid, and ordering them to pay their rents to him. This they refused to do. Whereupon as soon as might be he brought a Bill in Chancery against his mother, from an enrolled record of which I am able to give the ground of his action in the following words :—

“ After quoting the terms of his father's will, he contended that Sir Samuel devised his real estate to his wife not with any intent to disinherit him or to debar him from the benefit thereof, but because he (the complainant) had formerly con-

tracted some debts by reason of the short allowance his father made him, and therefore his father out of prudence, to prevent him spending the estates in case he should be disposed so to do and for that reason only had left them to his wife, who, he concluded, would be the best manager thereof for his benefit, and that his father intended the land so devised should be employed for his advantage, and had expressed himself to that purpose to several persons. He also stated that he was placed by his father in the capital messuage of his manor of Westerleigh called Seys, with direction to take care of his coal mines there, who allowed him two hundred pounds per annum, and ordered his bailiff to give him what other money he might have occasion for, and further added that his father in his lifetime was very desirous to see him married, and to that end caused proposals of marriage to be made to several persons, offering to settle great part of his estates upon him and his children, often saying he would leave him his estates and make him as good a commoner as any in the county. That his father died in 1704 having bought more land since making his will. That he after his father's death often waited upon his mother and desired her to permit him to live with her, and thinking it might be to his interest, since his father's death, treated with the friends of a gentlewoman of great value and undoubted reputation, who declared she approved of it if there might be a reasonable converture and settlement made, which he communicated to his mother desiring her concurrence therein, who not only refused to receive him into her house or to approve of his marriage or to consent that he should ever marry, but also refused to pay his life annuity unless he would abate four shillings in the pound for the Queen's duty, which he was forced to do, though she paid not two shillings in the pound out of the land from which it arised. He also requested his mother the defendant might be ordered to set forth what manors or lands Sir Samuel had bought after the publication of his will and might accmpt for the personal estate and might be compelled to convey to him all the real

estate and to deliver up all the deeds, evidences and writings concerning the same. And that he might be relieved he prayed the aid of the Honourable Court and that process of sub-pœna might be awarded against the defendant to compel her to appear and answer the said bill. Which being granted and the defendant therewith served, she accordingly appeared and by her answer said she was daughter and only child of George Morse deceased, and that she intermarried with Sir Samuel Astry, and that at the time of her marriage her father was possessed of divers lands of the yearly value of £500 and upward, and that in the year 1666 in consideration of her coming marriage her father settled all his estate to devolve upon her and her heirs on condition that she paid half his rents to her mother, Elizabeth Morse, and making his will on August 15th, 1688, disposed of his property in accordance with this settlement. That her father and mother died long since, that their property having come to her she appointed and made it over to Sir Samuel Astry and herself and the longer liver. That her husband, before making his will, purchased lands in Henbury, Acton, Westerleigh, and other places to the yearly value of £1,600 or thereabouts, besides the coal mines and some reversions which are very uncertain as to their value, and that after making his will he purchased other lands of the yearly value of £135, which cost in all £2,635, but denied that she had received the rents of these since her husband's death, but had ordered the tenants to pay them to the complainant. She also confessed that she had not delivered up the deeds touching them, because complainant detained in his custody some securities for money owing to her. And further said that Sir Samuel, having placed the complainant an apprentice to a merchant in Bristol (Mr. Gotley) he grew very extravagant and idle, and not only misspent but wasted considerable sums of his master's money, which his father discharged, and contracted a great many other debts so that he was in danger of arrest, that without leave of his master he absconded, left his master's service and went

to Westerleigh, a place where his father's coal works were, and settled himself in a house of ill reputation, where by assistance of the colliers he protected himself against his creditors for some time. But she denied that her husband ever employed him in the managry of the coal works, or allowed him any salary; but on the contrary declared that he could not trust him with the receipt of any money. And though her eldest son, Luke, died long before her husband, he never so much as mentioned any intention of altering his will. She further said that when her husband married her he was not in a position to make any settlement answerable to the fortune she brought him, and his son having proved undutiful and she having no settlement out of his estate, she believed for these reasons he devised her the estates. That complainant since the death of his father had so behaved himself towards her that she had no reason to do any more for him, and confessed that upon payment of his annuity she had deducted such taxes as were imposed upon it, which she hoped was lawful for her to do."

Richard Goodlad then gave evidence that " he had divers times heard the late Sir Samuel, before the making of his will, complain of the extravagance of St. John in running into debt by taking goods of tradesmen, and in particular of cloathes, which after wearing a week or some such short time he would give away, and take up other cloathes upon credit to make him a new suit. And also complained of him for leaving his master Gotley before his apprenticeship was out, and said several times that his estate should never go to pay his debts. And oftimes since Luke's death had he heard Sir Samuel chide St. John to his face, and tell him his brother had some wit, but that he was naught but a fool. And he was particularly incensed against him for his debts, a list of them amounting to £7,000 being handed in, but he afterwards heard they amounted to £10,000, and asked St. John whether he meant that he should go to gaol for his debts, and further said that he had marked him, which expression witness did not then

understand, but now knew that it referred to his will." (Sir Samuel evidently had a grim sense of humour.) The witness Goodlad added that " St. John was laid up in Newgate prison in Bristol for debt about last spring was a twelvemonth, and there continued three months, and that great applications were made to Sir Samuel to pay his debts that he might be set at liberty, but that Sir Samuel would not hearken to them, but said according to his way of living Newgate was the fittest place for him. That he at length got out of prison by giving bond to some of his creditors, and the rest seeing his father would do nothing for him withheld their actions. And St. John did in the last few years of his father's lifetime but seldom come to see him, sometimes but once a quarter, and his father was very wroth. The witness also deposed that St. John kept five horses and servants in rich liveries, and also believed that in his father's lifetime he sold his father's coals and kept the money unknown to his father or mother."

William Price, yeoman of Henbury, was next sworn, and deposed that " the night before he was arrested St. John was at his father's house, and brought an idle fellow with him whose company Sir Samuel had commanded him to shun. He never saw his father again till he was dying or dead. And further he said that he had often heard Sir Samuel admonish his son kindly of his faults and extravagance, and bid him be ruled by him and he would make a man of him, and at other times much blame and chide him, and use him very roughly, and find fault with his looks, and tell him he looked like the rogues he kept company with. And sometimes Sir Samuel spoke of his will and how many marks he had given him, saying his son hoped to spend his estate amongst his rogues and whores at Westerleigh, but should be deceived. And his father was much angered that he kept a great many horses of great value and a great many servants, some in rich liveries, at Westerleigh, spending not less than at the rate of £3,000 a year, that the liveries he gave his servants were some of the finest this deponent had even seen, being of blue cloth of

about or near 20s. a yard lined with scarlet and laced with broad gold lace. And more he did not know."

The case was heard on Tuesday, June 25th, 1706, when it was declared by the Court that Sir Samuel Astry's estate was well devised to the defendant, and that there did not appear in the will any trust for the ultimate benefit of the complainant, and that therefore complainant's bill stood dismissed out of court touching that estate which belonged to Sir Samuel at the time of making his will, but that to all land purchased afterwards the complainant was well entitled, and that defendant must deliver up all deeds belonging to those lands to complainant, who for his part was ordered to surrender all securities in his custody belonging to defendant.

St. John Astry having lost his case, retired from the scene. We hear nothing more of him until 1708, when he was heir to his uncle, Luke Astry, Esq., of Lincoln's Inn. There is nothing to tell us how he used this windfall; let us hope that before squandering it he satisfied the claims of his creditors.

After mourning Sir Samuel for three years, thoughts of re-marriage entered his widow's head. The name of the suitor for her hand we learn from the following curious document:—

"Wee Simon Harcourt of Pendley in the county of Hertford Esq. and Dame Elizabeth Astry, widow of Sir Samuel Astry, having a true love and affection for one the other, do hereby contract ourselves and doe hereby mutually promise and agree to celebrate marriage in the face of the church within three months from the date hereof. Witness our hands the 24th day of March, Anno Domini 1706-7.

"SIM. HARCOURT.

"ELIZ. ASTRY."

Some hitch in the proposed match seems to have occurred, as appended to this is a query and counsel's opinion in reply:—

"Query: If this contract doth not amount to a marriage.

“ The consent of the parties being the very substance and essence of marriage, I conceive this present contract to be an actuall marriage, and that Mr. Harcourt and my Lady are de jure, that is of right, man and wife. The celebrating of the marriage being only a compliance with the ecclesiastical constitutions and cannons and a reducing the first contract into form, but the contract itself makes the marriage. According to the rule of the cannons ‘ concensus non concubitus facit matrimonium,’ that is the consent not the consummation makes the marriage.

(Signed)

“ NATH. PIGOT,

“ Inner Temple, 28th of March, 1707.”

Whatever the difficulties, they were cleared away by this opinion. The register supplies the sequel :—

“ Simon Harcourt of Pendley in the county of Hertford, Esq., and ye Lady Elizabeth Astry of this parish were married July 22nd, 1707.”

Before her marriage Lady Astry took care to settle all her property upon herself, with power of disposal, reserving £1,000 per annum as her private pocket money. Shortly after her marriage she settled a rent charge of £20 a year, to arise from certain lands at Aust, to provide a stipend for a clergyman, who should read Divine Service in the church there every Sunday.

Mr. Harcourt, like Sir Samuel, was a barrister ; he held the post of Master of the Crown Office, and was cousin to Simon, Viscount Harcourt, Lord Chancellor in 1713, whom he made trustee to his marriage settlement. The historian Bigland erroneously confuses the two Simons.

Diana Astry, elder of the two unmarried daughters, soon followed her mother's example, being married in London, at Lincoln's Inn Chapel, on December 17th, 1708, to Richard Orlebar, Esq., of Hinwick, in Bedfordshire.

Lady Astry's second matrimonial venture was destined to be a brief one. Ten days after attending Diana's wedding

she died. Not a word touching this event has been preserved. She evidently had no time to make her will, as administration of her goods was granted to her widower on January 12th, 1709.

It is difficult to understand the succession to the property which ensued. Although St. John was living and Mrs. Chester had left a large family, the whole property, manorial rights and advowson of Henbury, seems to have been divided into three equal shares and given to the three surviving daughters, Lady Smyth, Mrs. Orlebar, and Arabella Astry. Nowhere does St. John's name appear as owning anything beyond the small amount of land he obtained after his father's death. Lady Astry may have made this arrangement in her marriage settlement with Simon Harcourt, but as it is not forthcoming the point must remain doubtful.

The next event in the Astry family was the death of St. John, which took place on November 21st, 1711. He was buried at Henbury on November 27th. From the following letter, written on December 13th, 1711, by Arabella Astry to Lady Smyth, we learn that he died repentant:—

“ Pall Mall,

“ December 13, 1711.

“ My dearest sister's kind and obliging letter was a great satisfaction and cordiale which revived my spirits yt have been so low with concern for my dear Brother's death that I find it very hard to overcome, but wee must submit to what pleases God. I am glad you approve of his being buried at Henbury. 'Twas where I designed to make a vault for myself, so thought it most proper for yt and other reasons. My brother was very penitent for a great while before I came away, and often prayed very heartily, and would say his thoughts were continually on ye other world, so that wee have great reason to hope he is happy. I am glad our affairs are finished with father Harcourt. I hear he is much out of humour, and says he ought to have had more, and brother

Harry's match I believe have displeased him, she having very little fortune. Mr. Edwards and I thought it best not to sell ye linnen, seeing it had had but bad usage, so sent Margaret into Essex Street and had it brought in a box nailed up to my lodgings, for I believe it would not yield much. As for ye pewter and other things, I believe 'twill be better to sell it yn bring it down. Ye marble chimney pieces are taken away and others put up. Sister Morley sets up very great, keeps her day and has a mighty fine coach and liverys making. I hear my father (Harcourt) is a courting, but don't know her name. Ye town is very full, but no devertion to me now. I have bin but very little out, so have not seen my neices, but will as soon as possible. I hear they took very well. I beg, my dear Madam, youle do me ye favour to present my humble service to Sir John, with ye same to yrself and nephews and neices.

“ I am, Madam,

“ Your most affec. faithful sister and servant,

“ ARA: ASTRY.

“ For the Lady Smyth,

“ att Long Ashton, near

“ Bristoll.”

Since St. John died intestate his three sisters divided what there was to divide between them. Arabella seems to have had a greater affection for him than the others, as she it was who erected the handsome tablet in Henbury Church with flowery, and I fear not over truthful, Latin inscription, at the end of which she refers to herself as “ the most loving of sisters, the most sorrowful of heiresses.”

At the division of the Astry property the Great House and a third of the estate fell to the share of Arabella, who married on July 9th, 1715, Charles William Howard, Lord Walden.

Shortly after her marriage she suffered a cruel blow in the death of her eldest sister, Lady Smyth, which took place on September 15th, 1715. On September 4th of the ensuing year Diana Orlebar, her remaining sister, died also. By this double bereavement Arabella was left last survivor of the Astry family. She and her husband resided in the Great House, which they kept up in a style befitting their rank. Their motto seems to have been: "A short life and a merry one." In 1718 Lord Walden's father died, by which event he became seventh Earl of Suffolk and second Earl of Bindon. His wife gave him no children to inherit his honours. His name remains in two places only in Henbury: namely—in the church tower, upon the tenor bell which he gave, and upon the grave of his negro servant, which has the following quaint inscription and verse:—

" HERE LYES YE BODY OF SCIPIO AFRICANUS,
SERVANT TO YE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHARLES
WILLIAM, EARL OF SUFFOLK AND BINDON,
WHIO DIED YE 21ST DEC., 1720, AGED 18
YEARS."

" I WHO WAS BORN A PAGAN AND A SLAVE,
NOW SWEETLY SLEEP A CHRISTIAN IN MY GRAVE.
WHAT THOUGH MY HUE WAS DARK, MY SAVIOUR'S SIGHT
SHALL CHANGE THAT DARKNESS INTO RADIANT LIGHT ;
SUCH GRACE TO ME MY LORD ON EARTH HAS GIVEN,
TO RECOMMEND ME TO MY LORD IN HEAVEN,
WHOSE GLORIOUS SECOND COMING HERE I WAIT,
WITH SAINTS AND ANGELS HIM TO CELEBRATE."

In 1720 the Rev. Arthur Darby, Vicar of Henbury, either talked of resigning or became very ill, in consequence of which Sir John Smyth, who had the next presentation, began to look out for a successor, and offered the refusal of the living

to the writer of the following letter—Mr. Holmes, of St. John's College, Oxford :—

“ To Sir John Smyth, at Henbury, near Bristol.

“ SIR,

“ I have taken ye first opportunity of returning you my most hearty thanks for your generous intentions towards me with relation to ye living of Henbury. It was a great surprise to me to receive so great a favour, where I was so little known, but as this increases the obligation, so will it raise in me the strongest sense of gratitude to my benefactor ; in ye meantime I beg leave to assure you that it shall be my constant endeavour faithfully and conscientiously to discharge ye trust you shall please to admit me to ; studying to behave myself in all points as a minister of God's church and as becomes

“ Sir,

“ Your most obliged humble servant,

“ W. HOLMES.

“ St. John's, Oxon, *July 9th*, 1720.”

Poor Mr. Holmes was compelled to wait six years for the living, as Mr. Darby, the incumbent, like the proverbial creaking door, hung on until 1726.

Early death was the fate of Sir Samuel Astry's family, and of most of his connections by marriage.

The next burial recorded in the register was that of Lord Suffolk : “ The Right Honourable the Earl of Suffolk was buried on February 9th, 1721-2,” and barely four months passed by before his widowed Countess was laid beside him : “ The Right Honourable the Countess of Suffolk was buried on June 23rd, 1722.” And with her ended the family of Astry of Henbury. No monument marks the resting-place of either Earl or Countess.

Lady Suffolk in her will makes her loving brother-in-law,

Sir John Smyth, Bart., her sole executor, leaving to him all her manors of Aust and Hannam Hay upon trust to pay all her debts and legacies. Should they fall short she charges her third part of the Hundred of Henbury with their payment. She bequeaths also to Sir John and his heirs all her third part of the Hundred of Henbury and the advowson of the church ; also all her capital messuage of Henbury and all farms and lands within the Hundred of Henbury, in Westbury-super-Trym, Stoke Bishop, Ridland, Shirehampton, Laurence Weston, Charlton, Compton Greenfield, and elsewhere, which last mentioned hundred, advowson, manor, etc., she was encouraged to leave to him as the only person likely to preserve the same, and she hoped he would so settle the same that they might remain in some one or other of her father's descendants, being unwilling that *her father's seat* should be sold, but preserved in some one of his family. She left legacies also to the children of her sister Anne, Mrs. Chester. So under this will Sir John Smyth in the year 1722 became possessed of Lady Suffolk's third share in the Astry estates in addition to the third he held as the inheritance of his wife. The remaining third belonged to the heirs of Diana Orlebar, who afterwards sold it to the heirs of Edward Colston.

On November 30th, 1725, Mr. Chock, master of the Blue Coat School for Boys in Henbury, died. His death was the reason of the following letter being written from one trustee, Edward Southwell, of Kingsweston, to another, Sir John Smyth :—

“ London, 27th December, 1725.

“ SIR,

“ The alteration which has happened in the trust you and I are engaged in by the death of Mr. Chock is what occasions the present trouble. I left you a troublesome piece of work, as well as an expensive one, which was the necessary reparation of his house and some much wanted in the school, as flooring, etc., and if the poor man had been a little more active, it had been gone upon sooner. To compass this you

see I have been obliged to dismiss most of our boys, and if I may venture to offer my opinion to you, I believe we shall want the assistance of the master's salary to Lady Day at least to do that worke; for you know we have no fines to expect from the estate, and therefore if we are once in debt, there is no way to get out. As to the choice of a master, it would import us to have a grave, able man, and a married one, that so the intention of the donor may be better answered by restoring the credit of the free school and entertaining boarders as I have formerly seen. Among the persons I have named for candidates, Mr. Ridley seems to me best to answer the qualifications requisite. I do not know the gentleman, but by the several accounts I have had of him. As I was told you intended a parish meeting on this affair on the 10th of next month, I was desirous to communicate my opinion of the matter. If the repairs of the school-house goes on, I believe Mr. Sampson, who is so near a neighbour, will with great readiness, upon your speaking, oversee the progress thereof, and that only the necessary be done, for all workmen should have an eye over them.

“ I wish you a happy new year, and am with much respect,

“ Sir, your most humble servant,

“ EDWARD SOUTHWELL.

“ To the Honble. Sir John Smyth, Bart.,

“ at Ashton,

“ near Bristol.”

I find the inscription on Mr. Chock's grave in Bigland's history :—

“ HERE LYETH THE BODY OF JOSEPH CHOCK OF THIS PARISH, SCHOOLMASTER, WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 30TH OF NOVEMBER, 1725, AGED 55.”

In the March next Sir John received the following epistle dealing with the same subject :—

“ HONRD. SIR,

“ I am informed that the woman who has in care the Blew-coat boys of Henbury School, is upon going off, and Sarah Lovering, a widow and parishioner, being a careful and staid person, putting in for the place I take the liberty to desire your interest in her favour at your next choice. She is very well known to most of the gentlemen, and there is no reflection on her former life. Be pleased to excuse this trouble from

“ Sir,

“ Your most humble servant,

“ RICH. HAYNES.

“ Bristol, 26th March, 1726.”

Sir John Smyth died on May 19th, 1726, aged 66, and was succeeded by his only surviving son, John Smyth. In the same year Mr. Darby, vicar of the parish, passed away, leaving the way open at last for the late Sir John's nominee, the Rev. William Holmes, who writes as follows to Sir John the younger on being presented to the living :—

“ Oxon, December 9th, 1726.

“ DEAR SIR JOHN,

“ I beg you would excuse the trouble I give you, because I could not foresee it, neither can I now avoid it. The Bishop of Bristol is of opinion that ye presentation to ye Vicarage of Henbury, tho' it be discharged, requires four pound stamps ; whereas I was informed there is no necessity for anything more than sixpenny stamps for a living under £10 value in ye King's books. I have ordered Mr. Wilmot to wait upon you on Monday or Tuesday morning, with another instrument of presentation to which I beg your hand and seal. I have wrote this post to Mr. Wickham desiring he would entirely

consult his own convenience in his return to Bristol, the ways being so exceedingly bad and my company uncertain, our audit beginning next week. I delivered your letter to ye President, and this night is appointed for drinking your health with ye gentlemen you mentioned and ye rest of your friends, who are all very much at your service. I desire you would make my most humble service acceptable to ye Ladies your sisters, and accept ye same from, Sir,

“ Your most dutiful and obliged servant,

“ W. HOLMES.

“ To Sir John Smyth, Bart.,

“ at Mrs. Davey’s, next to

“ the Duke of Newcastle’s,

“ in Lincoln’s Inn Fields,

“ London.”

Mr. Holmes remained Vicar of Henbury for a few years only, resigning in 1730 because he found it so extremely difficult to get the Henbury farmers to pay their tithe. He afterwards became Dean of Exeter and President of St. John’s College, Oxford. He is buried in the College Chapel.

Sir John Smyth the younger sold the Great House in 1730 to Mr. Jarrit Smith, of Bristol, who had married his sister, Florence, widow of John Piggot, Esq., of Brockley, Som.; so, although it passed out of Sir John’s hands, it yet remained in the family.

I copy the deed of conveyance :—

“ April 3rd, 1730, Sir John Smyth, bart., for and in consideration of £1,400 paid by Jarrit Smith of Bristol sells and conveys to him All that capital messuage or dwelling house situate and being in Henbury in the county of Gloucester wherein Sir Samuel Astry formerly dwelt and wherein the Right Honourable Arabella late Countess of Suffolk since lived with its gardens etc. together with the following closes of land to wit The two gastons and paddock, Goldsbury, Greens,

Broadlands Furlong, Ison's Hill, Ison's Grove, Shepherd's Close, Visto End and Mill Paddock all within the parish of Henbury."

We are familiar with some of these names.

In the previous year Sir John had sold to Mr. Dowle all the lands in Aust that were in his mother's allotment, and all his lands that were late Lady Suffolk's, except the manor and a few estates that were out on lives, which were afterwards sold to Mr. Degge for £840.

He also sold a half of Lady Suffolk's third of the manor of Henbury to the heirs of Edward Colston, Esq., who had already purchased the whole of the Orlebar share.

So up to the time of Sir John's death the lordship of Henbury, etc., was divided into two parts—one part vested in Sir John, and the other in the Colston heirs, now represented by Edward Colston, Esq., and Lord Middleton. The Great House and the land around it belonged to and was inhabited by Jarrit Smith and Florence his wife. In 1730 Sir John's eldest sister, Miss Anne Smyth, took up her abode in the old manor house, formerly Edward Capell's. She probably leased it from her brother. Her name first appears in the rate-book in 1730.

Sir John Smyth the younger died in 1741, leaving no children. The following letter is evidence of the high regard in which he was held by his neighbours :—

“ London, 10 Feb., 1740-1.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I most truly sympathise with you in all the just anxiety and concern you must have been in, to see our worthy friend Sir John in so much danger, but letters yesterday revive me with hopes of his recovery. He has generously consulted the welfare of your family and the Honour of mine, and has done more for us both than we can ever return him, and therefore I will not yeild one tittle even to you, in my gratitude

and affection for him. I love him and honour him for his sound heart and his hearty and generous friendship, for tho' I have an extensive prospect from Kingsweston, I may look far and near and not see his equal. He has done me no one kindness, which I have not often reflected upon ever since the first minute I heard he was ill, as well as before.

"The famous place bill which was rejected with disdain last year, will now swim smoothly thro' our house and sink amidst the Lords. We shall have some warm days and then a very thin house.

"Coll. Codrington is gone down to pay a last visit to his Lady, a loss he can never recover, and which can only be alleviated by not being duly sensible how great it is, and yet few men are such philosophers as not to aggravate their own misfortunes. Our worthy friend Mr. Brent is very well and ever kind. Pray let me know how Sir John does. You cannot communicate the case and concern where it will meet with a more feeling sympathy than to

"Dear Sir,

"Your affec. humble servant,

"E. SOUTHWELL.

"To the Rev.

"Samuel Coopey,

"Wraxall."

Under Sir John's will his three surviving sisters became his co-heirs.

Anne, the eldest, who died a spinster, received a third and the house she lived in at Henbury. The ultimate history of which we will follow out at once.

She died in 1760, leaving it to her nephew, Edward Gore, Esq., who sold it in 1762 to a rich merchant of Bristol named Thomas Farr, who took great delight in laying out and planting the slopes of Blaise Hill, on the summit of which he erected the well-known castle, where in ancient days stood

a chapel dedicated to St. Blasius, at whose shrine sailors belonging to ships trading in the Bristol Channel were wont to offer up their vows. Mr. Farr's tenure of the estate endured no longer than twelve years—a reverse of fortune obliged him to sell. A purchaser was found in Denham Skeate, D.C.L., of Bath, who held it barely eleven years, parting with it in 1789 to John Scandrett Harford, Esq., for the sum of £11,000. The Harfords took up their residence in the old manor house in 1790. On October 20th, 1795, Mr. Harford laid the foundation stone of the present mansion, known as Blaise Castle, and moved into the completed house in 1798. It still remains in the possession of his family, while the old house has been pulled down.

Sir John's next sister, Florence, wife of Jarrit Smith, received Aslton Court and a third of the whole estate as her share. She died in 1767, and is buried at Henbury with two of her infant children.

The third sister, Arabella, was wife of Edward Gore, Esq., of Barrow and Flax Bourton. She received the manor house of Christon, near Banwell, in Somerset, and a third of the whole estate. At her death her share passed to her eldest son, John Gore, Esq., who sold it (except Christon) to his uncle, Jarrit Smith, Esq., who thus became possessed of two-thirds of the whole estate. Edward, heir to his aunt, Anne Smyth, was the youngest son of Arabella Gore.

In 1763 Mr. Jarrit Smith was created a baronet.

In 1764, disregarding the wish expressed in Lady Suffolk's will, he sold the Great House to Mr. Michael Miller, a merchant of Bristol. I quote the deed of conveyance:—

“Memorandum. It is covenanted and agreed by and between Sir Jarrit Smith, Bart., of Bristol and Michael Miller of the same city merchant That the same Jarrit Smith shall on or before the 25th day of March next ensuing grant convey and assure unto the said Michael Miller. All that capital messuage or dwelling house with its gardens etc. in the parish

of Henbury as it was conveyed to him by the late Sir John Smyth, Bart., and the said Michael Miller on his part doth oblige himself on the premises being so granted to pay to the said Sir Jarrit Smith the sum of £2,000."

We see by this that Sir Jarrit made a substantial profit on the transaction. He was a lawyer.

The following note by Mr. Sampson belongs to the year 1785:—"Doctor Davie, our late Vicar, is dead, and we know not who is to be appointed Vicar of Henbury yet, the heirs of Sir John Smyth did appoint Dr. Davie, now the heirs of Colston and Willoughby present jointly and as they both would willingly serve their families occasions, I suppose this delay."

Dr. Davie had succeeded the Rev. J. Gardiner in 1779, and was in his turn succeeded by the Rev. Alexander Colston.

Although Edward Gore sold the third of the Henbury estate left him by his aunt, Anne Smyth, he retained his share of the patronage of the church, which passed to his son, the Rev. Charles Gore, who presented himself to the living in 1792, resigning it in 1803. His right of patronage has come down through his son, the Rev. George Gore, of Newton St. Loe, to his grandson, the present part patron, Francis W. G. Gore, Esq., of Court-y-ralla, Cardiff.

The remaining part of the manor and patronage has passed, as the Long Ashton estate has done, to the descendants of Sir Jarrit Smith and Dame Florence, his wife, and are now in the possession of Lady Smyth, of Ashton Court, who exercised her right of patronage when she presented her nephew, the Rev. Charles P. Way, to the living in 1906.

To bring the history of the Great House to a conclusion, Michael Miller made it his home, and many a festive gathering took place beneath its roof during his time, as is testified to by entries in the diaries of Sir Jarrit Smith and Sir John Hugh Smyth, his son, which have been preserved at Ashton Court.

He died in 1785, and was buried at Henbury. The inscription on his tomb in the church runs thus:—

“ NEAR THIS PLACE ARE INTERRED THE REMAINS OF MICHAEL MILLER, ESQ., BORN AT ST. GALL, IN SWITZERLAND, 22ND OF SEPT., 1703, DIED AT HENBURY IN 1785.”

Since he died intestate, and his son, Michael Miller, junior, Master of the Merchant Venturers in 1778, had predeceased him, his estates passed to his son's three daughters, Anne Maria Miller, wife of George Tierney, Esq., of Harley Street, Elizabeth Miller, who died under age; and Mary Miller, spinster, of Stapleton. On December 21st, 1792, Mrs. Tierney and Miss Mary Miller joined in selling the Great House and its land to Henry Francis Brooke, Esq., who let or sold it to Mrs. Cooke, a schoolmistress, who turned it into a boarding school for young ladies. A picture of it at this period is in the possession of Gen. Sampson-Way. In the course of time the school came to an end, and the Great House stood empty. Its final phase is recorded in a collection of letters edited by Mrs. Butterworth, called “*Portraiture of a Father.*” Speaking of her father, Thomas Stock, a worthy merchant of Bristol, Mrs. Butterworth says: “He therefore resolved to move into the country (from St. Michael's Hill), and at length, in 1809, met with an old-fashioned mansion in the village of Henbury, which in its palmy days belonged to Simon Harcourt, Esq., who possessed what is now the Blaise Castle estate. A picture of the house in question is given in Sir Robert Atkyns' *History of Gloucestershire*, with an avenue of trees extending from it to the knoll on which the castle stands. This agreeable prospect it no longer commanded; opposite walls intercepted the view, and standing at the junction of four roads it was exposed to noise and dust. My father having bought it pulled it down, retaining the old

garden, where Neptune presided over a pond strangely disproportionate to his bulky figure, and built a commodious residence at a short distance, where the undulating ground formed a pleasing landscape. This is the present Henbury Court."

Mrs. Butterworth is not quite exact in her details. That her father purchased the estate admits of no question, but as regards the house I have often heard the late Mr. Sampson, of Henbury, say that it was bought by his father, Edward Sampson, senior, and pulled down as he had use for the material. However, whether destroyed by Stock or Sampson, the Great House certainly ceased to exist in 1809, and the place where Morses, Astrys, Smyths, and Millers lived and died. knows them no more, but is given over to poultry and other denizens of the farmyard.

By the terms of the late Mr. Sampson's will, the site of the Great House passed, together with the Henbury Awdelett estate, in 1897, to Major-General Sampson-Way, C.B., seventh in descent from Sir Samuel Astry, so that thus, strange to say, after the lapse of many years, the pious wish expressed in Lady Suffolk's will is fulfilled, and all that remains of her father's seat is vested in one of her father's descendants.
