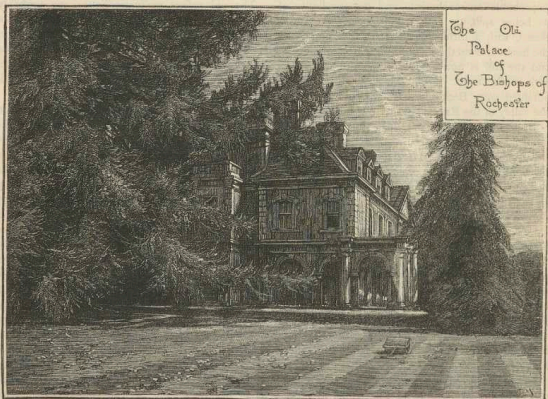


In a shady dell in the grounds, about a hundred yards eastward of the house, is the chalybeate well long celebrated in connection with Bromley. It is dedicated to St. Blaise, the patron saint of wool-combers, and was for many centuries the object of pious pilgrimages. There was here a little oratory, or chapel, and the circular stone covering of the sacred well is reputed to be the original one. The water still oozes up steadily, and all belief in its supernatural qualities has not yet fled from the

1754, it was, by the bishop's orders, immediately secured from the admixture of other waters; since which time numbers of people, especially of the middle and poorer sort, have been remarkably relieved by it from various infirmities and diseases.

"The water of the 'Bishop's Well,'" writes Hone, in his "Table Book," "is a chalybeate, honoured by local reputation with surprising properties; but in reality it is of the same nature as the mineral water of Tunbridge Wells. It rises so



BROMLEY PALACE.

inhabitants of the town; indeed, the addition of a tiled roof—like a lych-gate, only circular—when it was first set up over the well, caused considerable agitation in Bromley, the parishioners doubtless considering that it was only the prelude to walling it in, and an invasion of their rights.

The little oratory, we are told, was in former times much frequented at Whitsuntide, "because Lucas, who was Legate for Sextus IV. here in England, granted an indulgence and remission of forty days of enjoined penance to all those who should visit this chapel, and offer up their devotions there, on the three holy days of Pentecost." After the Reformation the oratory fell to ruins, and the well was stopped up; but being re-opened in

slowly as to yield scarcely a gallon in a quarter of an hour, and is retained in a small well about sixteen inches in diameter. To the stone-work of this little well a wooden cover is attached by a chain. When the fluid attains a certain height, its surplus trickles through an orifice at the side, to increase the water of a moat, or small lake, which borders the grounds of the palace, and is overhung on each side with the branches of luxuriant shrubs and trees. Above the well there is a roof of thatch, supported by six pillars, in the manner of a rustic temple, heightening the picturesque appearance of the scene." The 'Bishop's Well' is said," he adds, "to have been confounded with a spring of more ancient note, called St. Blaise's Well."