

which a flight of steps cut in the sandy rock lead down. It may have been used as a larder for venison when Nonsuch Park was a royal pleasure. The tradition is that the persecuted Protestants met here in the days of Queen Mary to read the Bible; and that later, when the place was in the possession of the Petre family, it was used as a hiding-place for equally persecuted Roman Catholic priests, when they said mass during the prevalence of the penal laws. The story, so common elsewhere, is current here also, that the steps form the entrance to an underground passage leading to Nonsuch.

There are one or two other good houses in the village, some of them old enough to have, or to have had, histories, but there is little or nothing for the rustic muse to record concerning them.

In this village lived Robert Percy Smith, better known as "Bobus Smith," the father of the Right

Honourable Robert Vernon Smith, M.P., afterwards Lord Lyveden, and the younger brother of Sydney Smith. He was one of the wittiest of the youthful Etonians who contributed to the *Microcosm*, and at Cambridge he was known as the best Latin verse writer of his time; and this opinion was endorsed later by Walter Savage Landor. He was afterwards Judge Advocate in Bengal, and M.P. for Lincoln. He died in 1844, a few weeks after his equally witty clerical brother.

Cheam Park, which bounds the south-west of the village, and extends to the gates of Nonsuch, was for many years the seat of the Palmers (relations of Lord Chancellor Selborne), but now has passed by marriage to the family of Wickham. Lower Cheam Park, on the north-east of the village, on the road to Sutton, belongs to the family of Antrobus. It is a good house of the last century, lying low in a small park.

CHAPTER XXVII.

NONSUCH.

"Hanc, quia non habent similem, laudare Britanni
Sæpe solent, Nullique Patrum cognominè dicunt."—LELAND.

Nonsuch and its Early History—Described by Evelyn and in the Parliamentary Survey—Visited by Queen Elizabeth—The Queen's Last Years spent here—The Earl of Essex—Peppas visits Nonsuch—The Duchess of Cleveland—"Diana's Dyke"—The Present Mansion—Archbishop Wateley.

In the present chapter we pass almost entirely out of the dull prosaic present into the courtly and poetic past, and we have to describe a building which, during its short-lived existence was unmatched in beauty, at all events in its ornamental details, and which, if we may judge from the few pictures of it that have come down to us, must have well deserved its somewhat ambitious name, at all events during the ten years when it was in the hands of the "Virgin Queen."

Nonsuch Palace was so called as being *sans pareil*. Its gardens were very fine, and were celebrated for their fertility, and they have given their name to one of the most delicious kinds of apples: indeed, the name of Nonsuch appears to have become popular, like "Windsor" or "Royal"; thus we find "Nonsuch apples," and even "Nonsuch lotteries!" It also gave its name to a wooden mansion on London Bridge, in which Hans Holbein lived,* and which often has been represented in topographical and architectural illustrations.

The estate of Nonsuch adjoins Cheam on the west, and lies in Cuddington, or Codintone, as it is called in "Domesday Book," a district which gave name to a branch of the Wateley family. In the reign of Henry III. Peter de Codington, *alias* Peter de Maldon, was a party to the conveyance of the Manor of Maldon to Walter de Merton, the founder of Merton College, Oxford. Sir Simon de Codynnton was knight of the shire for Surrey in several Parliaments in the reign of Edward III., and he held the office of sheriff in 1353 and 1364. Other knights of the same family lived in the reigns of Henry IV., his son, and grandson.

Cuddington is curious in one respect—it is and it is not a parish. It certainly *was* a parish and had a parish church down to the reign of Henry VIII.; but no sooner had the covetous tyrant set his eyes upon it than he resolved to destroy both the church and the adjoining manor-house, in order to build a royal residence, to which he gave the fanciful name of Nonsuch. To the new palace were attached two parks, one of which bore the name of Worcester, though for what reason is not known. Death, however, prevented the king from com-

* See "Old and New London," Vol. II., p. 16.