

and meaning of the king, his old master, the same should have been performed; and so it is now evident to be beholden of all strangers and others, for the honour of this realm, as a pearly thereof. The same he hath left to his posterity, garnished and replenished with rich furniture, among the which his Library is right worthy of remembrance."

For the last ten or twelve years of her reign Nonsuch was the most favoured residence of Queen Elizabeth. Here she kept open house, and rode out with hawking parties over the neighbouring downs; and here, in the evening, if there were no masque or other revelries, she would dance a galliard with her courtiers, in the hope of hiding from herself the advance of years.

Mr. Rowland Whyte, in September, 1599, writes to Sir Robert Sidney that "her Majesty is returned again to Nonesuch, which of all other places she likes best."

The last occasion on which Queen Elizabeth appears to have been at Nonsuch was in the summer of 1600, only three years before her death. Even at this date, when she was nearly sixty-seven, we are told by a contemporary writer that she is "excellently disposed to hunting, for every second day she is on horseback, and continues the sport long." During her stay here that summer she visited the Carews at Beddington, as we have seen,\* and dined with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Croydon Palace.

This house was the scene of at all events one incident which figures prominently in the history of England—the return of Essex from Ireland, and the first step of his disgrace. His royal mistress was residing here with her court at Michaelmas, 1599, when the earl reached the gates of the palace. "Covered with mire and stained with travel as he was," writes Miss Lucy Aikin, in her "Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth," "he hastened up the stairs, passed through the presence (room) and the privy chamber, and never stopped till he reached the queen's bedchamber, where he found her newly-risen, with her hair about her face. He knelt and kissed her hands, and she, in the agreeable surprise of beholding at her feet one whom she still loved, received him with so kind an aspect, and listened with such favour to all his excuses, that on leaving her, after a private conference of considerable duration, he appeared in high spirits, and thanked God that though he had suffered many storms abroad he found a sweet calm at home. He waited on her again as soon as he had changed his dress, and after a second

long and gracious conference, was freely visited by all the lords, ladies, and gentleman at the court, excepting the secretary (Sir Robert Cecil), who appeared somewhat shy of him."

Poor, credulous man! he little knew how soon he was destined to be jilted and thrown over by one who, though a queen, was still a woman, and in whom *varium et mutabile semper* was the very rule of her existence. That very evening, on re-visiting the queen, he found her manner towards him much changed;\* on the next day he was peremptorily ordered "to keep his chamber." Three or four days later he was commanded to leave the court, and was committed to the care of the Lord Keeper at York House. His open rebellion against the queen in the following year—the result of wounded pride—and his execution on Tower Hill, are known to every reader of the pages of English history.

The following loving epistles, written by the earl to the queen during his imprisonment, are amusing:—

"September 6, 1600.

"Haste, paper, to that happy presence, whence only unhappy I am banished. Kiss that fair correcting hand which lays new plasters to my lighter hurtes, butt to my greatest wounde applyeth nothing: Say this cometh from

"Pining, Languishing, Despairing,

"S. X."

"September 9, 1600.

"Wordes, if you can, express my lowly thankfulness—butt presse nott, sigh nott, moane nott, lest passion prompt you, and I by you both be betrayed. Reporte my silence, my solitarines, for mynne uttermost ambition is to be a mutte person in that presence, whear joy and wonder would barre speech,

"From

the Greatest Ladye's in Power  
And Goodnesse

humblest, mutte Vassalle,

"S. X."

In the above adulatory strain did this great person address the woman he despised, the sovereign against whom he rebelled, and who had consigned him to a prison! The cipher S. X. for *Essex* is quaint, and quaintness was the *ton* of the age. Some happy quaintness distinguishes all the epistles which have come down to us from the days

\* This interview is fully reported in a letter from Rowland Whyte, dated, "Nonsuch, Michaelmas Day at noon," and published in the "Sidney State Papers," Vol. II., pp. 127-9.

† See "Old and New London," Vol. III., p. 68.

\* See *ante*, p. 185.