

HISTORY
OF
SUTTON COLDFIELD

BY THE

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PREFACE

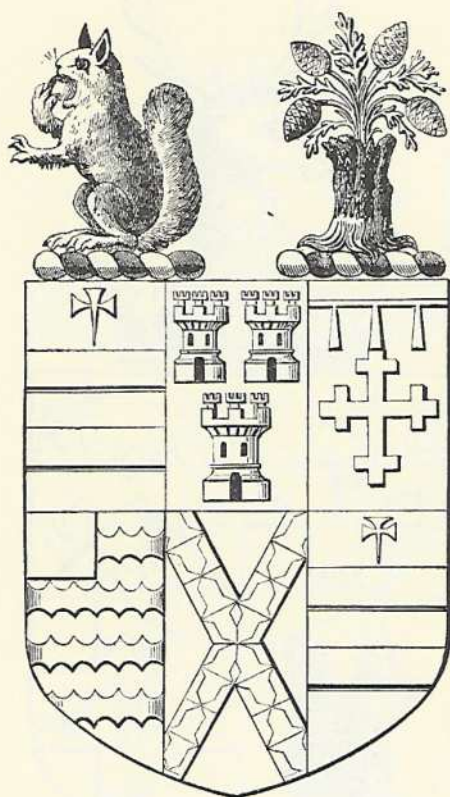
The writer does not suggest that the sketch of local history which follows is either complete or accurate in detail. It is simply intended as a view of the rise and progress of the Royal town of Sutton Coldfield on lines acceptable to the general reader, and has been as little as possible altered since its first appearance in the columns of the local newspaper, except by a few additions or corrections which have subsequently been brought to the knowledge of the author, who hopes that his work will be appreciated rather by its good intention than its imperfect execution.

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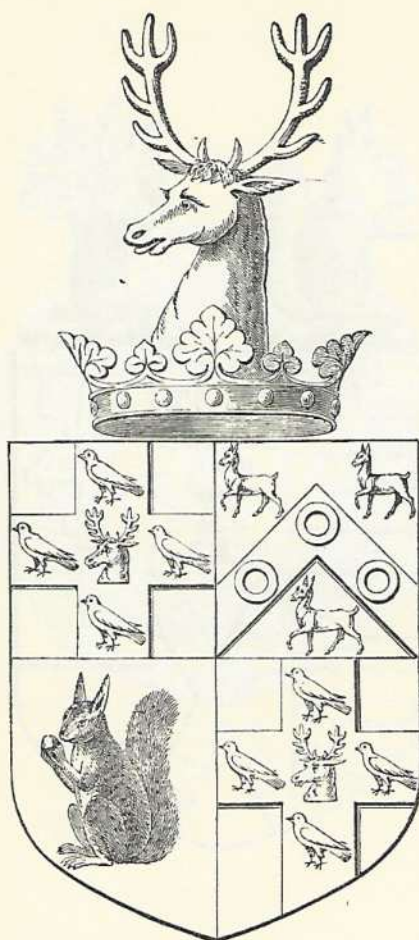
SEAL OF THE CORPORATION, 1619
(From the Visitation of Warwickshire)

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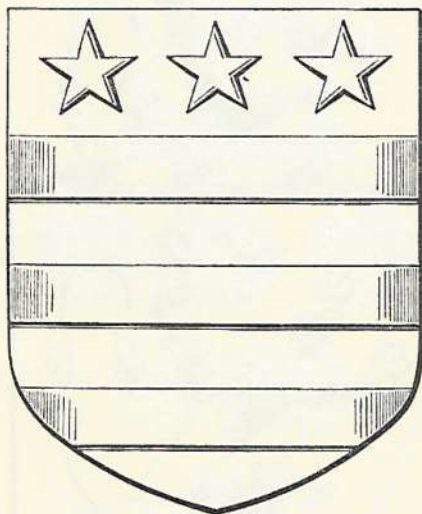
ARMS OF HOLTE, 1619—see p. 13
(From the Visitation of Warwickshire)

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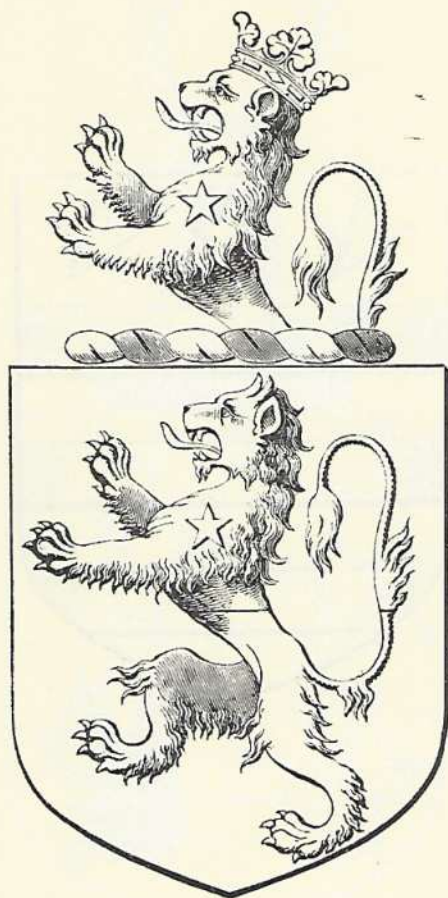
ARMS OF HARMAN, 1619—see p. 15
(From the Visitation of Warwickshire)

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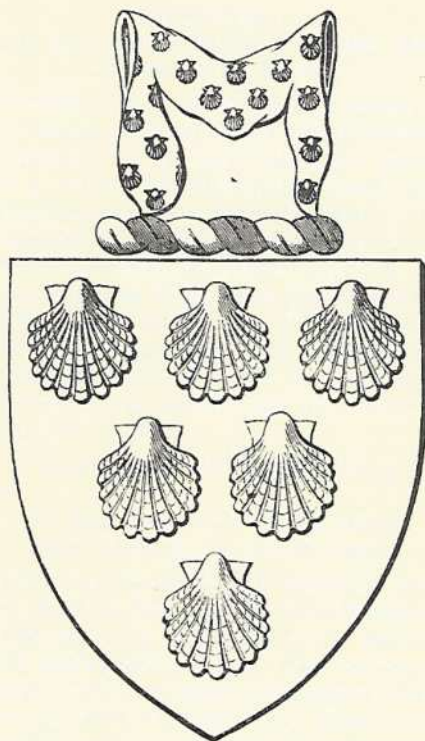


ARMS OF KEMPSON, 1619—see p. 40
(*From the Visitation of Warwickshire*)

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ARMS OF SADLER, 1619—see p. 42
(From the Visitation of Warwickshire)



ARMS OF HOLBECHE, 1619—see p. 56
(*From the Visitation of Warwickshire*)

HISTORY OF SUTTON COLDFIELD

CHAPTER I

Introduction—Ikenild Street—Domesday Book—
Customs of the Manor

WERE I to write history upon my own terms, and prescribe my own canons of authorship, I should reverse the process recognised at present as the only legitimate mode of making chronicle, and I would (metaphorically speaking) launch my bark upon the stream of time at the point where it has broadened into the wide expanse of to-day, and pursue its course upwards to the remote fountain head in the hidden past. As the established rule compels, I must now begin with the scantiest reservoirs of far-off information, pore over a tiny rill which hardly shews a sparkle amid the surrounding obscurity, and labour long in dark and devious passages before I arrive at anything which seems to have a bearing on the popular life of to-day, or the Royal Town as we know it in 1891.

There is, of course, one way of diversifying this sterility of primitive times,

“As map makers, on barren downs
Place elephants, in lieu of towns.”—Prior.

so a certain school of historians will embellish the empty catalogue of Briton, Roman, Saxon, Dane and Norman with second-hand generalities, no more applicable to the particular place of which they are professedly writing, than to any other town, village, or hamlet, which in some past century has been under the sway of one or more of these races. There are many introductory chapters in really good books of local history which had better be left unread for any bearing they may have upon the intrinsic subject of the volume. In endeavouring to avoid this not uncommon mistake I shall probably expose myself to the charge of being but a meagre historian of remote antiquity. In reply I would ask my readers to look at Sutton from my own, I might say from their own point of view, and to be content with as many isolated facts or sidelights of ancient history, as may tend to illustrate the progress by which our position of to-day has been attained. To attempt more would be to broaden our field of vision to a hazy and illimitable perspective, while less would bring our focus down to the minute groping of the mere hunter after documentary varieties.

On the lines just indicated there will be little to say upon the history of Sutton Coldfield in British or Roman times. The geologist has indeed a claim to take us back to a period antecedent to either, and to challenge our attention while he describes those changes in the earth's crust, which have led to the peculiarities which distinguish the Park, and have impressed upon our high lands the name of Coldfield. The position, the subsoil, and the watershed of Sutton have all been considerable factors in her history, and the physical geography of every district is a most valuable and instructive study, yet unless the subject be treated more scientifically and thoroughly than is compatible with the plan of the present sketch of local history, it is best only to deal with it so far as it bears upon the facts or the surmises which come under our review. In this regard, I should like to say that I think the cold hard subsoil, the till or pock stone, which abounds to the north and west of Sutton, is more likely the origin of the name of Coldfield (properly restricted to that portion of the district) than the conjecture that the Druidical rites upon Barr Beacon gave to the adjacent heath the title of Col-field, the field or habitation of the religious. History is the record of man's invasion of nature; and the hill and dale, the fen and forest which in savage and neglected beauty lay here from primeval days were first broken in upon by the Roman spade, in that magnificent relic of the ever-civilizing race which is still to be seen in Sutton Park; the great road across England from Southwest to Northeast, known as the Ryknield, or Ikenild, or Ikening Street, from its traversing (as some authors consider) the country of that tribe called by the Romans Icenii, or as others have more plausibly maintained, from a tribe styled Hwiccan. It enters the Park boundary on the Perry Barr side, a little south of the point where the road from Perry to Four Oaks crosses the old Chester road, and leaves it again near Streetly station. It formed, until the boundaries of counties were altered, the division line between Warwickshire and Staffordshire through the Park; the western portion of which is in the latter county. Although it was written a century ago, the account of this road given by Shaw, the historian of Staffordshire, is still the best. "If any remains of venerable antiquity may claim attention, or even a distant visit from all who have the least curiosity for such researches, it is the Ikenild way on its course through Sutton Park, and across the Coldfield. It is here a very spacious road, not less than sixty feet in breadth, and though the surface be in general over-run with heath, and for a short space in the Park overspread by oaks of considerable magnitude, yet the regularity of its figure has not been disturbed by the lapse of fourteen centuries. It is formed by gravel and materials on the spot, high raised in the centre with a gentle slope to the borders on each side, where it is skirted by the gutters from which it was in part cast up. The admirable

preservation of its original rotundity of surface, to the extent of some miles, is owing to the following circumstances: 1st—Its situation on ground where the busy transforming hand of nature has never intruded, being for a mile and a half enclosed in the Park, and beyond that extending more than a mile on the south, and nearly a mile on the north side of the Park, over a dreary desert, the aspect of which does not seem to have changed since the time of the Romans; and secondly, it is not in use as a public road for carriages, nor are any marks of ruts or other inequalities from friction visible on its surface." It will be observed that the "dreary desert" on either side of the Park enclosure has now become cultivated land, and that in consequence much of the line as described by Shaw has been obliterated. More than forty years ago, the writer traced, on horseback, the course of the road from the Park to Birmingham, but this would be impossible now. Excavations were made some years ago for the purpose of examining the construction of the roadway, which turned out to be chiefly macadamized stone, broken to the size of that now used to metal roads. Shaw speaks of a pavement, but none was met with. No coins or relics have ever, to my knowledge, been found in that part of the road which passes through the Park, with the exception of a small bronze of Constantine in 1883; although discoveries of more value have been made near Birmingham, at Bourne Pool, and at Wall, where it crosses the other great Roman road from London to the West—Watling Street—the road of the Gatheli or Celts. Etocetum or Wall was of course a place of great military importance in the time of the Caesars, and the neighbouring hamlet, Chesterfield, derives its name from their camp. But there is nothing to lead to the belief that any number of Roman subjects congregated at Sutton; nor, although the Saxon seat of government in the Midlands was at Tamworth and then at Kingsbury, have we any evidence that Sutton had come into existence as a village in Saxon times. On the contrary when the Normans prepared that careful and accurate description of the land they had annexed, "a map and picture of the kingdom," as Mr. Freeman calls it—which we name Domesday book; there was no church at Sutton, and the arable land bore no proportion to the woodland. Sutton is rated at eight hides; a hide being the occupation of one family, from 100 to 200 acres. The woods extended to two miles in length, and one in breadth, all valued at four pounds; Wigginshill, a separate district, occupied by one Bruning, a Saxon freeholder, is certified to contain three yard-lands (i.e., 72 acres) having woods of two furlongs in length and one in breadth. Sutton was then the property of Edwin Earl of Mercia (Leicester), grandson of the famous Lady Godiva; and Wigginshill of Turchill, the Saxon Earl of Warwick. Edwin was put to death by the Conqueror, in 1071, and his possessions annexed to the Crown; Sutton remaining royal

property until exchanged by King Henry the First, in 1126, with Roger de Newburgh, the Norman Earl of Warwick—whose father possessed the other estates of Earl Turchill just mentioned. The chase of Sutton then extended from Schrafford (Salford) Bridge, by Perry Barr and the Beacon, to the source of Bourne Brook, pursuing the course of the latter to its junction with the Tame at Drayton. The site of Sutton town is very nearly the centre of this district, and it was here, on Manor Hill, that the hunting seat of the feudal lord was erected, while the nucleus of a village arose near the mill, on the opposite side of the reedy ponds, which filled the valley below, and were crossed by a causeway along the mill-dam. That no great population existed is indicated by the fact that no church was erected, and no permanent priest settled here until the beginning of the fourteenth century. During nearly two hundred years any religious rites required by the Earl and his retainers when at Sutton, were no doubt performed in the "Free Chapel of St. Blaize," which existed within the precincts of the Manor House, as late as the sixteenth century.

It has been asserted, on the strength of a document dated from Sutton, April 7th, 1208, that King John visited the Manor House; but as he was at Waverley Abbey on the 4th April in that year, and at Guildford on the sixth, it is pretty clear that Sutton in Surrey was the place from which he dated.

In the third year of Edward the Second (1308-9), at a Court Leet and Court Baron for this manor, the ancient customs thereof were certified by the jury upon their oaths, and a translation from the original Latin, as given by Dugdale, is printed in the "Forest and Chase," as follows:

"The inquisition of twelve jurymen taken at this view, before Galfrid de Okenham, seneschal, by oath of Anselm de Clifton and others, jurymen, charged (to enquire) concerning the ancient customs of that lordship, as well with regard to freemen as bond-servants, what sort of customs they used to make and to have before the coronation of our lord king Henry (III), grandfather of the present king, from the days of Athelstan, some time king of England, by whom aforetime the ancient usages and customs of the lordship were made and settled.

"Who say upon their oath, that every freeman of Sutton was accustomed to hold his lands and tenements by virtue and effect of his original charter; and if there should be any plea about land between any freeman of that lordship, they used to be pleaded and concluded by writ of our lord the king, according to the law of England, before the justiciaries. And those men of bondage-tenure who held a whole yardland or more used to be officers of the king, or lord, during the lord's pleasure, whoever might have been elected to that office.

"Also, those who held half a yardland, or a nook of land, or a cottage of bondage tenure, used to be bedell of the manor and

decenary. And also all those who held in bondage tenure, used to be called customary tenants. And whenever the lord came to hunt, those customary tenants used to drive the wanlass to a stand in driving the wild beasts, according to the quantity of their tenure; as those who held a whole yardland, for two days, and so of others. And they used to have among them half of the fee of a woodward of the venison taken.

"Also they used to be keepers of the Coldfield heath, whenever they were chosen by their neighbours at the court; and they used to buy and sell freely, both in and out of the lordship of Sutton, without challenge. And also they used to do suit at the court of Sutton from three weeks to three weeks, and to pay the rent of assize, with tallage, according to the quantity of customary tenants of this sort, at the four usual terms of the year, &c. And they used to have house-bote and hay-bote, by view of the foresters and woodwards, in the time of Lent, enough to repair their hedges and houses in bondage tenure.

"And at the death of customary tenants of this kind, the Lord used to have, in the name of the heriot, the best animal, and no more; neither goods nor chattels, neither in the life nor after the death of a customary tenant of this kind, unless for this reason, that the lord's eldest son or daughter were going to be married. And the lord used to have, at his pleasure, of those who were dead, before the administration of the executors, the third part of all the goods of a customary tenant of this kind who was dead. And of customary tenants of this kind while living, the lord used to have in like manner the half of all his goods, saving oxen enough for ploughing, and heifers for milking, when his (the lord's) eldest son or daughter was going to be married. And if any of these customary tenants alienated his bondage tenure to any one, they used to give up that tenure in court before the seneschal (i.e., the steward), and raise and pay a fine at the lord's pleasure.

"And also, if any of these customary tenants went out of the lordship, and would not abide there any longer, they used to come into court, and give up into the hands of the lord their tenure of bondage, with all their horses and colts, and cart bound with iron, with their hogs, their whole pieces of cloth, their wool not spun, and their best brass pot: and go out and abide wherever he would without challenge of the lord, and himself, with all his posterity, to be free for ever. And also all tenants, as well free as customary, used to have common pasturage with all their cattle, within the lordship of Sutton, in all the out-woods and other common places, at all times of the year; and also in all separate places from the feast of St. Michael the Archangel to the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Mary, excepting the lord's land and the lord's park, and excepting also the gardens of the neighbours.

"And none of these customary tenants used to grind his corn

but at the lord's water-mill, so long as the mill was in repair for grinding, unless they first paid (for) the whole of the corn to the lord's miller, upon pain of forfeiture of the whole of the corn; excepting the tenants of Maney, Windley, and Wigula (?), who ground at the lord's windmill at Maney.

"And they also say, that they have heard their ancestors say, that at the time the manor of Sutton aforesaid was in the hands of the king of England all the chase was afforested, and that all the dogs within the forest used to be ringed and maimed on the left paw; and that, after they came into the hands of the Earl of Warwick, they had leave to have and to hold dogs of all kind whole and not ringed.

"And also all tenants, as well customary as free, used to have the dead wood in all the woods, wherever it might be found, for firing. And also all freeholders used to be summoned to appear for three days before the court, and the customary tenants likewise. And if there was a plea of debt or offence, or any plea between neighbours, and the defendants denied it, and waged law against the plaintiff, they used to make law with the third hand, and they used to essoin themselves of the common suit of court twice, and the third time appear and warrant the essoin; and likewise of the plea, as well of the plaintiff as the defendant, to be essoined twice of the plea, and twice of the law, and the third time to come, or have the judgment of the court. And the customary tenants used to be twice fined in court for houses found on bondage tenure; and the third time, if it was not repaired, they used to incur a punishment at the lord's pleasure.

"And the aforesaid customary tenants used to repair the bank round the mill-pool of the lord of Sutton with earth-work as often as was necessary, being warned with reasonable warning, and if they did not come they used to be fined at the court next ensuing: and they used to be fined in like manner if they did not come to the wanlass, whenever the lord came to hunt.

"And all customary tenants, who held a whole yardland in bondage, used to work for the lord for two days in autumn: and in like manner all other customary tenants according to the quantity of their tenure, at reasonable warning given by the overseer; for which they used to have one fat sheep and four pennyworth of white bread, and twelve casks of beer; and if they did not come then they used to be fined at the court next ensuing.

"And they say that all the aforesaid customs used to be kept, both from the time of King Athelstan and the time of King John, and before the coronation of King Henry III; and the predecessors of the aforesaid jurymen . . . And they say that Waleran, formerly Earl of Warwick, for himself and his heirs, granted that all the customs aforesaid, and all other ancient customs, should last for ever."

CHAPTER II

The first Church and Market at Sutton—The Chase and Manor—
The Norman Earls of Warwick—Progress under the Plantagenets
—The Wars of the Roses and their effect on Sutton

DURING the hundred and fifty years which had elapsed between the coming of the Normans and the grant of a market and foundation of a church (the harbingers of municipal existence for Sutton), sundry changes had taken place in the ownership of the Manor itself, and the other properties on the borders of the Chase. Roger Newburgh, the first Earl of Warwick who owned Sutton, after three generations came to be represented by an heiress who married William Mauduit, and the daughter of this pair, Isabel, married William de Beauchamp, whose grandson, Guy, was the Earl who obtained the market charter. Guy's father, William, had granted parks to Ralph de Limesi at Weeford, and to Ralph Lord Basset at Drayton, the latter being the representative of a powerful legal family, with whom in 1201 a dispute had arisen which was the subject of an arbitration, terminating in a permission to Basset to make a Park. At Middleton were seated the family of Marmion, to whom in a few years the Frevills succeeded; at Wishaw were the de Berefords or Beresfords, another great Norman family who afterwards settled in Ireland. At Wigginshill the ancient family of Arden, who claimed descent from the Saxon earls of Warwick, had their abode at Pedimore Hall, and at Erdington (written Hardington in Domesday, and pronounced Yenton) lived the de Erdingtons, large landed proprietors in several other counties, whose Oxfordshire parish, changing the spelling instead of the pronunciation, is now found in the map as Yarnton. In 1297 William Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, had granted a licence to John de Pirie to enclose a Park at Little Barr, and Sir Ralph de Grendon held the lordship of Shenstone. Thus, Sutton was a sort of centre of a recognised circle of Manors, and began to attract a population. Guy, who was a thorough soldier, was a favourite of the martial King Edward I, and as a sportsman, probably affected his Sutton residence; he obtained a charter for a weekly market on Tuesdays, and an annual fair to begin on the eve of the Holy Trinity, to whom the Church was dedicated, and to continue for three days following. This was in 1300, and the foundation of the Church may be assigned to the same date, as the first incumbent of whom we have mention, Gregory Harold, was ordained priest of Sutton Coldfield in 1305. The lower portion of the existing tower is the chief part of the original structure now remaining, both chancel and nave having been rebuilt at subsequent periods. "The Forest and Chase of Sutton Coldfield, 1860," mentions a tradition that the intended site of the Church was Maney Hill, but that in the night spirits always carried away the stones to the present site of the sacred edifice.

The weak reign of Edward the Second (1307) found Guy in opposition to the Court; having a particular hatred to the King's favourite, Piers Gaveston, who had given him the nick-name of the Black Dog of Arden, he surprised the guard set upon him by the barons who had removed him from the King's council, and carrying him to Blacklow-hill, near Warwick, beheaded him there; four years after this murder, for which the feeble monarch was unable to exact any retribution, Guy died, aged 44, not without suspicion of poison, leaving his son under age. In 1317, the King, in the patron's minority, presented Robert Hilary, of Sandiacre, Notts., to the incumbency of the Church. It is clear that all throughout our national history, the inner life of places like Sutton was ever broadening out into the arts of civilization and the usages of freedom and order. It is worth notice that in 1309, at the first "court leet and court baron," when the jury certified on their oaths the ancient customs of the Manor, one statement is, "that at the time the Manor of Sutton was in the hands of the King of England, all the Chase was afforested, and that all the dogs within the forest used to be ringed and maimed in the left paw, and that after they came into the hands of the Earl of Warwick, they had leave to have their dogs whole and not ringed." This marks a relaxation of the barbarous severity of the Norman forest laws, owing mainly, I venture to think, to the increasing importance of that hardy body of men, the Yeomen archers, the mainstay of an English army in the middle ages, who took the name of yeomen, or yewmen, it is surmised, from the yew bows with which they did such good service. The feudal system had one excellent result, it brought into the field soldiers from each class of the community. The French infantry were a mere mob of serfs, ill-armed, with no spirit to fight, and no knowledge of shooting; the cross-bow men, who were the archers of French armies, being mercenaries from Italy or Savoy. An English nobleman, when title meant absolute ownership of the district from which the holder derived his name, found it rather to his interest to be lenient with a sportsman who was a good archer, and prided himself more on the marksmen he could bring into the field, than upon the magnitude of his herds of deer and flocks of wild fowl. Many readers of the present day are quite incredulous as to the exploits ascribed to the bowmen of old; accustomed only to see bows and arrows in the hands of ladies, or of elderly gentlemen who take them up rarely, and but by way of pastime, they unconsciously measure the skill of our mædieval yeomanry by the feeble results which they have before their eyes. But history shows beyond doubt that the boast of King Edward's archer, that he carried twelve Frenchmen's lives under his belt, was literally true, and that this skill was gained by wild shooting practised on the Chase from the earliest years. The boy, who was not allowed to shoot with a more costly bow

than one of wychhazel, until he had attained the age of sixteen, was of course debarred from any but the smaller game; but the grown man had beasts of chase, from the stag to the coney, and vermin like foxes, wolves and badgers, for his quarry; and (when he attained the skill to stalk sitting or shoot flying), birds from the heron and the bustard to the tiniest wild duck, and predatory ones from the eagle to the shrike, to exercise his prowess upon—with two incentives, hunger and the love of exhibiting dexterity to spur him on.*

The formation of markets was accompanied also by that of roads, and the foundation of houses for the accommodation of minor landowners, who held from the overlord, or sometimes from the crown direct. In addition to Pedimore Hall, already mentioned, where the Arden family continued during the whole of this period to reside, two other houses of some pretension were erected in the vicinity of Sutton. One of these, New Hall, was first in the possession of Edward Sutton, of Warwick, a dependent, no doubt, of the Earl: and afterwards of Sir John Lizours, of Fledborough, in Nottinghamshire, who seems to have been succeeded by a family of the name of Stanhope, in Henry VI's time, but no regular succession of tenants can be traced till later in our history.

The other house was Langley, where the Beresfords of Wishaw had been seated for some time. One of the family, William, was Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in 1289, and another was a confidential retainer of the Black Prince. Their line, so far as Langley was concerned, ended in a family of the name of Hore, to whom we shall refer hereafter. Neither the present New Hall nor the buildings which were left after the demolition of Langley by Sir Robert Peel, retain much trace of the original architecture, the moats alone, as at Pedimore also, giving evidence of the remote antiquity of their foundation. Of the original Manor house, too, there remain no traces. It was pulled down in the reign of Henry VIII, when Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset, grandfather of Lady Jane Grey, carried away the best part of the materials to the house he was erecting at Bradgate, in Leicestershire, and the rest of the stones were employed by Bishop Vesey in his Sutton improvements. Some residence, however, was put together out of the ruins, for thirty years after this the Manor house was occupied by Robert Perrott (of the same family, probably, as Sir Herbert Perrot, of Morton, Co. Hereford) who married Anne, daughter of William Gardiner, of Bermondsey, and this lady surviving him—she died in 1597—brought the property to her second husband, Marmaduke Dawney, of York,

* The Yeomanry were not only encouraged but legally compelled to practise the use of the bow. The Butts, as a name of a place; or as at Sutton, Hammond's Budds, or Bassett's Butts, indicates the spot where turf butts were erected for archery purposes.

whose descendants occupied it for two or three generations. In 1671 Mr. Thomas Dawney was buried, says the register, "in the churchyard in a grave on the north side the Dyall post (where the tomb is still to be seen) about ix foote deep, at which time the Towne Hall floore fell downe by the presse of people there." The people had assembled to receive a funeral dole. The son of this gentleman returned to Yorkshire, and is buried in St. Michael le Belfrey's Church, York. The family are now existing in that county, and have been ennobled by the title of Viscount Downe. But the present house known as the Manor is more modern still.

A good account of the remains of the Manor House in 1860, is given in the "Forest and Chase, page 62." "The area of these buildings is still perfectly traceable. The summit of the hill has an escarpment, which has scarcely been disturbed since Bishop Vesey removed its supporting stone wall. This area is an oval of about one hundred yards in its largest diameter. Foundations, supposed to be those of the chapel, are on its east side, partly under the present house; and the site of a tower and its dungeon is observed on the north-west corner, where rubbish has been filled in, and from which have been recently dug up a few relics of antiquity—pieces of broken encaustic tiles,* of different eras of workmanship, the earliest having in their patterns oak leaves and the trefoil, the one of later date the fleur-de-lis, &c., probably remains of the tessellated pavement of the chapel, and from the same place a globe of stone with lead in its socket, shewing it to have been an ornament of some portions of the building. On the north-end of the area, part of the foundations of the exterior wall have been laid bare. A narrow gravel path has also been traced a little below the present surface, which may have led from a door in the tower to one near in a building on the west, where foundations have been met with. A wall has been traced dividing the area into two courts. From the flat of the hill south a road now runs on the west side of the hill to the causeway leading between the two ancient pools to the park. Since the drainage of the pools in the middle of the last century, this raised dam has divided the meadows.

"The entrance to the Manor house may have been on the east, where there are hollows as if towers had been rooted up, and where there are traces of extended adjoining buildings. There is still a gateway, leading now to nothing, under a farm building of timber and brick, a few centuries old, but apparently raised upon more ancient foundations of stone, which may have supported the towers and portcullis protecting the steep eastern ascent, where is seen a widely marked road to this gateway from the pools below. A well is in the rock half-way down this sup-

* Many fragments of these tiles are still preserved by the present owner. One which represents a figure of a man blowing a hunting horn, is pronounced by the best authorities to be of Norman workmanship.

posed road, a deep well is also within the area."

The making of the railway, and improvements to the house and grounds, have still farther obliterated the traces of the old Manor since this was published. But the features of the site remain the same, and in spite of buildings covering much of the area, the old pools below are quite distinct. These were an essential appendage to every country house even as late as the last century. From Windley to Holland was one chain of pools, until the great flood which broke the dam in 1668, and hence were taken the bream which the Earls of Warwick loved so well that they had them sent long distances, as appears from accounts still extant, one being of fish carried as far as Middleham (Yorkshire), at a cost of 10s., the fishermen for catching four fish receiving 4s. 8d. and for the baking of the fish in flour twelvepence, with spice, pepper, saffron, cloves and cinnamon, sixpence more being paid. Considering that in those days a ram was sold for eightpence, and twenty-one lambs for four shillings, the "breams" were a costly luxury; but our ancestors were great lovers of fish and especially of fresh water ones. Even as late as 1761, a large pond was made at the Rectory expressly for "meat fish" as they were called—carp, "great big creatures like sucking pigs" the then Rector writes in 1786, the same kind with which Mr. Cradock relates in his diary he entertained Johnson and Garrick "quite sumptuously." Fish was reckoned wholesome. "It is observed by the most learned physicians, that the casting off of Lent and other fish days hath doubtless been the chief cause of those many putrid, shaking, intermitting agues, unto which this nation of ours is now more subject than those wiser countries that feed on herbs, salads, and plenty of fish," says Isaac Walton; and in 1564, Cecil was the chief author of the Act whereby Wednesday was made a fish day "for the great benefit that wise men apprehended to be by spending much fish in the realm." "But this was not well resented by the people," says our author, "and but slenderly observed, the English nation being very much addicted to flesh meats, and not pleased to have more fish days imposed upon them; for those of ancient time were also to be observed." The Archbishop obtained a dispensation for the Wednesdays, for the two universities, and Winchester. So that even after moats ceased to be a means of security to country houses, they served to supplement the larder.

The advancement of intercourse required the multiplication of roads; not that for centuries the idea of a road in England exceeded the bridlepath, on which so narrow was the causeway that the encountering horseman had to pass upon the left hand, so that the dangling scabbard might not strike the other horse; on the continent wide roads and wheeled carriages led to the natural arrangement as practised in walking, of passing to the right, but here the rule was reversed, doubtless for the reason I have given.

Sometimes the narrow track took its way between overhanging banks for the sake of shelter, or perhaps of secrecy, or the constant passage of laden beasts of burden wore down the friable sand stone, and made a lane. The oldest remaining road in the vicinity of Sutton is of this character, the one which, crossing the embankment of Windley pool, connects the Manor House, and the Driffold (drive-fold, where the beasts pastured in the Chase, were driven to be counted or marked) with the park on the one hand, and the meadows and more fertile tracts near the stream on the other; and pursues its way to Coleshill, thence obtaining the name of Cole's-lane. Over the heaths and open wastes however, the roads were mere converging tracks, as straight as the broken nature of the ground would admit of, and abandoned for a contiguous path whenever the soil beneath was worn into a quagmire. It was on a road of this kind, which seems to have taken much the same direction in which the Chester-road runs now, near Oscott, a road called the Ridgway, that in 1324, one Elias le Collier was robbed of £300, and the felons not being brought to justice, proceeded under the statute of Winchester to claim compensation from the hundred: and as the road divided the counties of Warwick and Stafford, he sued Hemlingford in the one, and Offlow in the other. The sheriffs of both counties were directed to levy the sums to which he was entitled, but after much procrastination and many excuses, only a small proportion of the fine was levied, and the influence of the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, many of whose tenants were interested, procured a suspension of the writ.

It would be along this Ridgeway or Chester-road, that Shakespeare intended Sir John Falstaff to march, when he represents him as taking Sutton Coldfield as his halting place from Coventry, on his road to Shrewsbury fight in 1408. He would have to make but a slight detour to his right, to quarter his ragged regiment in a quiet village, where their grotesque appearance would create less ridicule than at Coventry, and the next morning by Little Aston and Mill Green, he would again strike into the direct road to the west. It is one of those touches of local knowledge, which our great Warwickshire poet so often introduced, and we may feel proud that our town is connected even so slightly with his deathless creations.

The son of Earl Guy, Thomas, became one of King Edward III's most trusted captains and was among the original knights companions of the illustrious Order of the Garter. No doubt he drew considerably upon the population of his various estates for the archers and pikemen whom he led to the foreign campaigns of his sovereign. His grandson, Richard, was equally renowned for his exploits in the service of the two first kings of the House of Lancaster, and he was materially supported by the Warwick-

shire archers whom he brought into the field.* This would tend to increase his interest in the population of the Chase. In 1353 a fresh market charter had been obtained, and one for a second fair on St. Martin's Eve and Day. Periods of national glory, are not however, as places like Sutton know to their cost, always periods of local prosperity, and instances of decadence may be traced already. In 1419 the Earl of Warwick leased his house at Sutton, with park and pools, to Sir Ralph Bracebridge for life, Bracebridge contracting to serve him with nine lances and seventeen bowmen in the garrison of Calais. But periods of civil war are far more injurious to the progress of communities than any other condition of public life, and during that disastrous half century which deluged England with blood, counting among her slain three kings, twelve dukes, one marquess, seventeen earls, one viscount, and twenty-four barons, Sutton well-nigh fell back into the depopulated condition of the ante-Norman era. Civil warfare has been attended with similar results at every period of our history. An aged woman of Dorsetshire told Mr. Hansard, as a tradition received from her grandmother, how, during the height of the war between Charles I and his Parliament, the unusual event of a wayfarer passing through her village excited so much curiosity that the whole population crowded to their doors and remained watching until he disappeared. It served as food for conversation long afterwards, on such a day, said they, we saw a man! For miles round none but women were left at home; the lands lay uncultivated, and famine gradually consumed the aged and the helpless. As to children, his informant added that none below a certain age remembered their fathers, and although familiar with the name they knew not its meaning. The course of events placed Sutton in the van of the terrible national struggle called the Wars of the Roses. Henry Beauchamp, the son of Richard, Earl of Warwick, was so high in favour in the early part of Henry VI's reign, that he was created Duke of Warwick and King of the Isle of Wight, but he died at the age of twenty-two in 1445 and at the death of his infant daughter, four years later, his estates came to his sister, the wife of Richard Nevil, son of the Earl of Salisbury, who was created Earl of Warwick in 1450. This great ambitious, farsighted, unscrupulous noble struck the first blow in the sanguinary contest for the crown, at St. Alban's, where, with his Midland archers, he burst into the centre of the town through one of the gardens attached to the principal houses, and, forming his bowmen in a position whence they could rake the streets, fore and aft, with their fire, as the leaders of the Lancastrians endeavoured to rally their men, he shot them down one

* When Henry V was preparing for his campaign in France in 1417 he ordered the Lord Lieutenants of various counties to collect and send him six feathers from the wing of every goose (except brood geese) in their respective counties. The words of the order bear the strongest testimony to the good service which the archers had performed. The proportion to be furnished by the counties of Warwick and Leicester was 60,000 feathers.

by one. King Henry himself was shot in the neck, the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Sandys in the face, the Earl of Stafford in the hand, the Marquis of Dorset in the body, "The affair was entirely with the archers, for the men at arms never engaged," says the historian. It would be easy to go on with the same chronicle of slaughter and success, but in the case of Sutton the temporary triumph of the House of York produced but little benefit to the retainers of a politician who had changed sides just when his original selection was upon the very brink of victory. On his espousal of the cause of the dethroned King Henry, Warwick (as we learn from Leland) repaired to Sutton, where he felled and sold large quantities of timber to provide funds for the campaigns. He died fighting against the House of York, although in the days of his partisanship of that family a Lancastrian partisan, John Holt, of Aston, had been made ranger of Sutton in his place, and the Manor conferred by Henry VI on Sir Edmund Mountford. During the reigns of the three sovereigns of the Line of York, the Manor was granted, as forfeited property, to the two daughters of the Kingmaker Earl, but they could never have desired or been able to take up their residence at the Manor, and in 1487, Anne, Countess of Warwick, resigned to the King, Henry VII, all her manors (of which a list is given, including Sutton Coldfield) only reserving the Manor and Lordship of Erdington. This marks the close of the prosperity of the feudal village, which, rising with the fortunes of a great historic family, fell with them into decay. In 1499 the last of the great Earls, the heir of the Plantagenet kings, the son of George, Duke of Clarence, by Isabel, daughter of Richard, Earl of Warwick, was executed on Tower Hill, and, but for the grant of the Chapel of St. Blaize, within the walls of the Manor-house, to a young churchman who had begun to make a name, there was no sign of life or hope for the future of Sutton. The kingmaker has been justly surnamed the Last of the Barons, a title too true as far as our local history is concerned, and we begin a new chapter under totally different conditions.

Before closing this period, however, it may be noted that of eighteen incumbents who held the benefice of Sutton up to 1500, only one seems to have been a man of any note, and he was only rector for two years in 1431-33. John Arundel, physician to King Henry VI, in days when science of every kind was monopolised by the clergy, was patronised by the monarch, and seems at the time of his appointment to Sutton to have been Dean of Windsor and a Prebendary of Wells. After leaving Sutton he became a Prebendary of Lincoln, London, York, and Hereford, as well as Archdeacon of Richmond, from whence the King wished to promote him to the Palatine Bishopric of Durham, but the minor mitre of Chichester was ultimately conferred upon him in 1459, where he died in 1477.

CHAPTER III

Sutton under Bishop Vesey—The Charter—The first Corporation
—School and Park

IF the inscription upon his tombstone be admitted as evidence, John Harman was born in 1452, but in that case we must believe him to have gone to Oxford at 30 years of age, and so good an authority as Dr. Bloxham considered that the date should be placed eight or even ten years later. At any rate, Sutton was his native place, and his father a substantial yeoman named William Harman, who lived at More Hall, and had lands at a place called Wakers. It is probable that he was connected with or dependent on that Mountford, upon whom Henry VI had conferred the manor on the rebellion of the Earl of Warwick. The exact cause or time of the assumption of the name of Vesey by both father and son has not been discovered, though the author of Skelton's Oxfordshire says that it was in consequence of the Bishop's having been educated in infancy by a person of that name. It is a curious coincidence that the names of Harman and Vesey are both found two centuries later in the Irish Peerage, without apparently any connection with Moor Hall or Sutton. John Harman (whose father had died in 1470), betook himself to Oxford in 1482, and in 1486-7 became fellow of Magdalen College, where the famous Thomas Wolsey was being educated, having taken his Bachelor's degree at 15 years of age in 1485. Harman was soon placed in the chair of Professor of Civil Law at Oxford, but in 1489 we find him at Court, attached to the household of Elizabeth of York, Queen of Henry VII, and a courtier he remained until circumstances drove him into retirement in his native place, to the great advantage of Sutton. He commenced his clerical career, however, as chaplain of the free chapel of St. Blaize, to which I have referred before, succeeding, it would appear, a relative or namesake. This was in 1495, and he was then acting as commissary to the Bishop of Lincoln in Oxfordshire (that Archdeaconry being in the Diocese of Lincoln till the foundation of the See of Oxford by King Henry VIII), but in 1498 he accepted a similar appointment as Vicar General of the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry, and in 1507 Dugdale says that he was presented to the vicarage of St. Michael's in the latter city, which would bring him into a more intimate connection with his own county. But the Court attachment was still strong, and though his first patroness, Elizabeth of York, had died in 1502, and her husband seven years later, the accession of Henry VIII made Vesey's fellow collegian, Wolsey, all powerful and in 1515 we find Vesey, now Dean of Windsor, taking a conspicuous part in the investiture of the old Magdalen man with the Cardinal's hat, by reading the Papal Bull; in the same year on the birth of the Princess Mary, he was named as tutor of

the heir to the throne. The mere list of his preferments during the next four years would be tedious to the ordinary reader, but for the insight which it gives into the corrupt condition of the Church before the Reformation, and the evils against which, irrespective of doctrine, the common sense of the nation revolted. Vesey, while a courtier and a statesman in his everyday life, seems to have held a prebend at Salisbury, the chaplaincy of St. Stephen's Westminster, the Chapels Royal of Windsor and Exeter, the archdeaconries of Chester and Barnstaple, the precentorship of Exeter, and the deanery of Wolverhampton. Nor was his case at all a singular one; not to dwell upon the fact that four Bishops of Worcester, from 1497 to 1535, were Italians and non-resident, the then incumbent of Sutton Coldfield Church, Dr. John Taylor, appointed in 1504, had been ambassador to the Court of Burgundy while rector of Hatfield, and in 1509, still retaining his "cure of souls" at Sutton, became clerk of the parliament, and in 1515, Archdeacon of Derby, and prolocutor of the Convocation. It was not until his promotion to the archdeaconry of Buckingham, in 1516, that he resigned his church at Sutton to Dr. George Heneage, a prebendary of Lincoln, who himself resigned on being promoted, in 1521, to the Archdeaconry of Oxford.

If we may judge of the theological views of Vesey from the opinions of his royal pupil, who after her accession to the throne evidently retained a very high esteem for her father's councillor and her own instructor, they were not by any means liberal or progressive; yet we find him taking a liberal view of a case important in itself and its consequences. In 1515, a protestant prisoner accused of heresy, by name Richard Hunne, was assassinated in the Lollard's tower at Lambeth Palace, where he was confined. The church party attempted to resist the jurisdiction of the secular judges in case of clerics accused of murder, the crime being laid to a priest, one Horsey, but Dr. Standish advised Henry to insist upon his prerogative, and was supported by Vesey, then Dean of the Chapel Royal. Henry was pleased with the tone of Vesey's politics, and that he was esteemed a just and upright man is clear from his appointment as a commissioner for imparking lands, from the occurrence of his name as executor to the wills of several of the leading nobility, and the reputation which he left behind him while exercising the office of Warden of the Marches of Wales. So in 1519 he received the appointment of Bishop of Exeter, a see at one time the richest in the kingdom, but which had already begun to feel the exactions of those who had learned the easy lesson of rapine. The process was very simple. The King and his advisers began by suppressing monasteries to found colleges, and add new bishoprics; but much of the money stuck to the fingers of the agents in the transfer, and speedily the descendants of those who had founded these endow-

ments, not unnaturally began to discover that if they were to be diverted from the objects to which they had been originally destined, they might as well revert to the representatives of the original donors. The great landowners therefore appeared as claimants for the sequestered revenues, and their example was rapidly followed by a class of aspirants who had far less right to put themselves forward; while the tenantry not unnaturally rebelled against a change of masters, of which the stork *vice* log monarchy was a fair prototype. Before Vesey took possession, nearly half the manors which the see possessed had been alienated, yet the appetite for spoil had only been whetted, and during his tenure of the bishopric, open robbery was the rule. He left but seven or eight Manors to his successor, and those leased out, and but one residence for the Bishop, and that denuded, where he found fourteen well furnished. His very town house, in St. Clement Danes, had been seized by the rapacious Dudley, and the only remnant of his rule in his old diocese is a coat of arms occasionally to be found on a church tower, or a parsonage house to which he contributed. Having no very high standard of episcopal duty, it is no wonder that he soon began to hanker for the pleasant places of his native Sutton, now, by the ruin of her former powerful patrons, left in a plight melancholy enough. He had already, ten years before, obtained the vicarage of Aston, and the chantry lands at Sutton, but in 1527 he obtained from the King certain lands called Moor Crofts and Heath Yards, with forty acres of waste, which he had license to enclose. These properties included the old stone house at the head of the Sutton brook, which he re-built, and added a mansion on the hill to the northeast, where he fixed his residence in noble state, his household expenses amounting, Dugdale says, to £1,500 a year, a large sum in those days, having a retinue of 140 men in scarlet caps and gowns in attendance. Of these retainers he occasionally made a draft to augment the King's forces, as in 1544, when twenty men and £100 were his contribution to the siege of Boulogne, and in 1549, when forty men were sent to assist the Earl of Warwick in the suppression of Kett's rebellion in Norfolk. The house (now modernized) he called Moorhall, and here he resided until his death.

The date of this establishment was 1527; a period at which he appears in high favour at Court, as he was a principal figure in King Henry's retinue at his visit to Francis I, in 1532, and in 1534 he was one of the consecrators of Cranmer as Archbishop. But, indeed, Wolsey's fall did not occur till 1530, so that circumstances all conspired to make the occasion of which Vesey availed himself to gain a standing for his native town, which it has not lost in the process of centuries. His first steps were in an ecclesiastical direction, for he founded, in conjunction with certain inhabitants of the town, a service to be held in the Church three

times a week—or to find, with the advice of the curate of the church, a learned layman to teach grammar and rhetoric in the town, who with his scholars should daily sing the psalm “de profundis” for the souls of their benefactors—or for the provision of “certain lay artificers to teach their trades” or to other “pious uses.” In 1541, the idea of a chaplain for service seems to have been abandoned, and a fresh trust created for school purposes only, which, four years later, was placed in the hands of the Corporation created by the charter which in 1528 Vesey had obtained from the Crown. It was based upon a grant of the Park and Manor of Sutton, which had been forfeited by the attainder of the Earl of Warwick,* and placed them in the hands of a local body for the benefit of the inhabitants. Having named his brother-in-law, William Gybons, or Gibbons, of New Hall, the first Warden, to hold office from December 16th, 1528, to the 2nd of November following, the charter authorised the inhabitants to provide a moot hall (house of assembly) wherein to hold court-leets, elections, and other meetings, and that before the expiration of his office the new Warden was to call a meeting of the greater and more discreet number of the inhabitants, being of 22 years at the least, who should elect twenty-four from their number, to form with the Warden the society for the government of the town, and from these twenty-five the Warden should be annually chosen, vacancies by death or removal being previously filled up by the votes of the remaining members, and the Warden and each member were to take an oath to apply all the revenue in yearly “exoneration of the poor inhabitants within the said lordship of the fifteenth or any other subsidy of the King, if any such payment should happen in that year, or for the building of houses within the lordship or town aforesaid, or for the marriage of poor girls, or for any pious secular use.”

To the body thus elected were granted by charter the privileges of the bailiff of the manor, then held by Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers of Chartley; of park-keeper, then held by Sir Henry Willoughby, of underkeeper of Hill Wood and Lyndrich, held by William Rigeley; and the herbage of the park, then in the hands of Lodowick Wyndewood; also the perquisites of the manor, and clerkship of the market, the right to have a weekly market and two fairs annually, and free warren throughout the lordship. They were also empowered to grant sixty acres or less of the waste for enclosure to persons desirous of building houses, and to take a chief rent for the same, and generally “to make and ordain statutes, ordinances, acts, provisions, and constitutions in the town aforesaid for the public commodity and advantages.” Having thus secured the government of his native place, the

* In 1528 King Henry had appointed John Penne rider of the chase at Sutton.

Bishop laid out from his own funds large sums to promote improvements. He built the Moot Hall, with a dungeon and a market house, for £35 6s. 6d., paved the town at a cost of £40 3s. 8d., and in the Park, fenced out the seven heys or woods for £43 2s. 6d., besides other contributions towards the fencing, his object being to stock the Park with mares, colts and horses at £40; having disaforested the chase, he allowed the poor householders to keep cows there at twenty pence a head, and to take wood from the coppices for fuel.

In 1530, he gave the church an organ, and three years later built two aisles or side chapels to the chancel, which bear to this day marks of the Renaissance influence in architecture which was beginning to debase it. He also built two bridges at Curdworth and Water Orton—the latter remaining almost in the state in which he left it—and many stone houses, still to be seen in various parts of the borough. For these he had a double object in view, those near the town he wished to stock with artificers to introduce the trade of kersey-making from Devonshire—"a sacrilegious scheme which heaven refused to prosper," says a Devonian—who bears no grudge against our prelate for alienating manors which he was not able to keep, but considers his assault on the staple industry of the diocese a wilful injury; but in the remote parts of the parish these houses were used for another purpose of more utility, and in which, if contemporary historians are to be believed, he was perfectly successful. The reign of Henry VIII was for many reasons prolific in pauperism, the idle and barbarous habits induced by civil commotion, and the dissolution of the monasteries which had furnished employment and charity to large bodies of the population, were two of the principal of these reasons, and the poor law of Queen Elizabeth had to be passed in the next generation to cope with them. Sutton, you will remember, lay just out of the track of two great roads—the Ridgeway or Chester-road, skirting the Coldfield on the west—while on the east ran the highway from Coleshill to Lichfield, which was crossed near Weeford by the old Watling-street way. These were both infested by marauders, and were also difficult to traverse by the wheeled carriages which were now coming into use, on account of the stony and undrained nature of the soil through which they passed. The Bishop had his outlying buildings constructed of sufficient strength to check any invasion of banditti, and placed in them suitable persons to act as guards to travellers, particularly near certain notorious localities known as the den of thieves (Ruffians' Den), near Canwell Gate. Here he enclosed a piece of land called Cotysmore, containing nine acres, and established one of his own retainers in the dwelling. But he judiciously considered that prevention was better than cure, and Mr. Ribton Turner quotes from a scarce tract of 1646, professing

to be the confessions of a highway robber in Queen Elizabeth's time, the following statement, which evidently refers to our Bishop:—"One Mr. Harman, a Warwickshire gentleman, dwelling about Sutton Colsill, seeing his parish to be pestered extremely with sturdy beggars and wandering rogues, did take order that they should all be sent to his house, and presently he set them to work to gather stones forth of his grounds, and gave them some small reliefe in meat and drink and a penny a day, and held them hard to work, (having lustie stout servants to see to them) and when he had made an end of gathering his owne grounds, and paid them their wages, which thing when all of the rest of the wandering Beggars and rogues understood, they durst not one of them come a begging in that parish, for feare they should be made to work." Tradition asserts that the compulsory labour instituted by the Bishop took the shape of gathering stones from the highways, and as late as 1765 the road map from London to Chester gives at the 113th mile from London on the Coleshill and Lichfield-road the "Bishop's heap of stones." The bounty of Vesey, in fact, was regulated by notions of political economy much in advance of that day or even of later generations. With the exception of a meadow for widows, there seems to have been no direct dole in all his bequests, and he was evidently a believer in technical education, for in founding a school in 1541 (in which he had the assistance of Thomas Gibbons, Hugh Turner, Richard Turner, and Mary, his wife), he stipulated that if a learned layman to teach grammar might not be had, some lay artificers should be engaged to teach their trades, so that the inhabitants might live more happily. The grammar teaching, however, became the rule of the school, as will be seen hereafter; the Corporation in 1544 appointing John Savage as master, and in 1546 his successor, Lawrence Nowell, of Brasenose College, a distinguished scholar and author of a Saxon dictionary, who however, resigned in 1548, in consequence of a suspicion that he neglected his scholars, receiving certain arrears of salary and a gratuity of ten pounds, to which the Bishop contributed five marks. As, however, this was the first year of King Edward VI's reign, and Nowell was an adherent of the reformation, he probably wished to resign in order that he might obtain advancement in the Church, which, in fact he ultimately did, being made, on Queen Elizabeth's accession, Archdeacon of Derby and Dean of Lichfield: but as it will be seen hereafter, the management of the school by the Corporation was not long continued.

Little more remains to be said concerning Sutton's great founder. He gradually lost his footing at Court, as he voted only by proxy on the question of annulling the king's marriage with Anne of Cleves in 1540; and, in 1551, he resigned his see to

Miles Coverdale, the translator of the Bible, who had been appointed his coadjutor. Two years later his old pupil, Queen Mary, on her accession to the throne, reinstated him, but another coadjutor was appointed, and except for one brief visit to Exeter, Vesey did not again leave Moor Hall, where he died in 1555.

The monument erected to his memory in Sutton Church is in many ways a very interesting one, even passing by the claims it has on the reverential gratitude of successive generations of his townsmen. For it is the only monumental effigy of a Bishop in Warwickshire. The figure represents him vested in the Alb, Dalmatic, and Chesible, with the Mitre on his head, and holding the Crozier, the crook of which is of late date. He is represented in the meridian of life, which Mr. Bloxham says "makes me think that the effigy was sculptured during his life time, a practice not unusual, as I think at the time of his death the vestments had been changed, and the Rochet and Chimere composed the episcopal habit."

In 1748, a grand nephew of the Bishop, Sir John Wyrley, Knight of Hampstead, in Handsworth, removed the effigy from above the vault and placed it in a niche in the wall, on a panel with a long inscription recording the Bishop's virtues and good deeds, and fenced it in with a heavy though handsome iron railing, now made into gates for the south porch. In 1875, the Corporation, by Mr. Bloxham's advice, and under the supervision of an architect whom he recommended, took the effigy from the wall, and having thoroughly renovated it, placed it upon an altar tomb over the actual grave, the alabaster marble slab of which they used as a resting place for the effigy, recording in an inscription round the margin the date and particulars of this latest restoration. During the progress of the work some doubts were expressed as to the actual position of the grave. These were set at rest on August 25th, 1875, by an inspection of the vault itself, opened for the purpose. It had been ransacked before, probably in 1748; and a few bones, a skull of extremely globular figure, and the jaw bone of a man of very advanced age, were all the remains which could be discovered, and these scattered at random on the floor of the grave. They were enclosed in a jar and replaced with every care, a certificate being added recapitulating the circumstances.

John Leveson, brother-in-law of the Bishop, was warden in 1530; John Harman, his nephew, warden in 1540 and 1547; William Harman, another nephew, in 1544; Robert Pudsey, husband of a niece in 1554; John Harman, a grand nephew, in 1578 and 1589; and Raphael Harman, whose relationship is not ascertained, in 1577 and 1591. The family representation appears to have vested itself in Sibil Harman, the heir of Thomas Harman, of Canwell, who was six years old in 1654.

CHAPTER IV

Sutton before the Civil Wars—The Commonwealth and
Restoration—The Second Charter

THE history of Sutton from the death of Vesey is that of a community with a settled government and assured existence; the struggling days of the town were over, and from this time no serious interruption of its progress took place. The printing press and the efforts for the diffusion of knowledge began to influence the minds of the people, and the introduction of better means of transit from one part of the kingdom to another militated against contracted opinions and provincial disadvantages. Of course the communication between one place and another, was still very indifferent and tedious; Lettice Knollys, the famous old Countess of Leicester, who is said to have lived to see her grand-children's grand-children, could write in 1597 to her son, the Earl of Essex, from Drayton Manor, that if he asked her to visit him in London, he must send some coach horses, for her own would never be able to draw her through the mire, but it was a step in advance to have wheeled carriages at all; and so with glass windows, boarded floors, and other matters to us of everyday use, but then of rare and novel luxury. I should imagine that the town of Sutton of that day, was chiefly a group of half-timbered houses, upon the Church Hill, extending from thence a short distance in the line of the present High Street. The school house stood to the south of the Church, in the present Churchyard, and the Town Hall, where the three streets meet. In those days the road or path to the north led to Moor Hall, and over the waste to Canwell—the track to the south found its way through a marshy flat, on the right into the Coleslane, on the left up the hill to Langley: the third road, by the Mill, and across the Dam, was the usual route to Coleshill on the one hand, and the Park on the other. The bed of both of the little streams, which run to the east and west of the town, was choked and stagnant, so that Holland and the Blabs were names of real significance. The rector resided in part of the house nearly opposite the Church, of which the old stone gables are visible from the Midland Station Yard, and the tithe barn made up the rest of the building. Tamworth was accessible by a road passing Moor Hall and Ashfurlong, to Basset's Pole—a large mast of twenty-five or thirty feet high—standing at Carriage-way-head, as a guide over the heath. But the interests of Sutton were now mainly local, and independent of the wider politics of the kingdom, so that they did not feel the struggles which succeeded the great Reformation era, with the same directness as the distresses which the Wars of the Roses had stirred. It was fortunate, perhaps, that Vesey's life had been prolonged into Queen Mary's reign, for his cautious attitude in Church matters prevented any of those disastrous

results of misplaced zeal, which worked so much damage in other places. One John Burges, of whom we can only surmise that he may have been the same person who was about that time Treasurer and Prebendary of Lincoln, succeeded Heneage in the benefice in 1521, and six years later, was succeeded by Ralph Wendon, who held the living until 1563 (Queen Elizabeth having succeeded to the throne in 1558). Unless we may conclude that Wendon abdicated his duties at any time, which is possible, from the occurrence of the name of William Prest as "ghostly father and curate," in two wills of 1544 and 1556, he must have been of an accommodating temper to have held the living during such changes as took place in the four reigns which his tenure comprehended. Vesey, it will be remembered, added to and beautified the Church. It is quite possible that the tower, which has evidently been recased at some period later than its erection, owes its battlements to his liberality; and for two centuries at least, no great change took place in the fabric beyond the erection of a pew, or the substitution on the wall of a written text for a "superstitious picture," some of the former being discovered when the walls were first denuded of whitewash in 1860. The inventory of church goods in Edward VI's reign is very simple and short, "a oon-chalice;" four bells, and a saints bell; three vestments all silk, a silk cope, four fronts for altars all silk, six altar cloths, and six towels. The present communion plate bears date as follows:—A small cup, cover, and paten 1609, a larger cup, the gift of Cornelius Burges, whose wife Abigail was buried March 16th, 1626, and a large flagon and two patens, the gift of Henry Walter, a native of Sutton, and steward to three Earls of Clare, who gave forty marks for communion plate at the choice of John Riland, Rector, and George Sacheverell, 1694. The bells have been twice renewed, as will appear in the proper date.

In 1559, Queen Elizabeth sold the advowson to Thomas Gibbons—through two well-known brokers of Church property named Glascock and Blunt—and Thomas Gibbons, who lived at Newhall, and was warden in 1542, presented on Wendon's death John Fodon, who after twenty years was succeeded by Peter Sankye. Gibbons in 1586 sold the advowson to John Shilton (or Shelton), mercer, of Birmingham, but in 1583 Elizabeth Eliot, widow, had presented Mr. Roger Eliot, whose wife and children lie buried under a quaint brass effigy in the chancel. Shilton, therefore, did not exercise his patronage until 1617, when he appointed Dr. John Burges—a man of some eminence among the moderate Puritan party, to which Shilton evidently belonged.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth Burges had held a benefice in the diocese of Norwich, which he had resigned on account of conscientious objections, not so much (he avers) on his own part as on that of his parishioners, to the use of the surplice, but in a short time he had conformed and been given a church in the

diocese of Lincoln. On the accession of James I, Burges put himself forward in the interest of the Puritan party, with one of whose leaders, Cartwright, he was on intimate terms, and preached a sermon before the King, which gave such offence that he was committed to the Tower and banished beyond sea. Going to Leyden he studied medicine, and though James retained so much resentment against him as to prevent his practising in London, he settled at Isleworth, where he prospered as a physician, and was before long allowed to exercise his clerical functions. He was presented to Sutton Rectory, after it had been refused by Dr. Chetwynd, afterwards Dean of Bristol, and became at length a Prebendary of Lichfield. His opinions had veered round once more, as his best known work is of a moderate High Church tone, a vindication of his Bishop (Morton, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry), against an attack by his old friend Cartwright—and a defence of the surplice, the cross in baptism, and kneeling at the Lord's supper, the "nocent ceremonies" to which Cartwright objected.

Besides this work, and his sermon before King James, he published the remains of Dr. Thomas Wilcocks, whose daughter, Sara, was his first wife, and a controversial tract entitled the "Pope's deadly wound," by T. (homas) C. (larke) of Sutton Coldfield. His son, John Burges, became a Doctor of Medicine, and lived at Sutton, where he was Warden in 1637. A daughter, Abigail, married Cornelius Burges, a well-known Puritan Minister, and died in 1626, on which occasion her husband gave the Sacramental Cup, now in use in the parish church.

The pervading sentiment of Sutton seems at that time to have been Puritan, as we may conclude from the election as High Steward of the Corporation, of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, who afterwards commanded the Parliamentary Army. He was at that time owner of Drayton Manor, and his cousin, Sir Walter Devereux, had for some time been settled at Castle Bromwich and Newhall, where the family arms are in a window of the banquetting room, so that there were local reasons for electing him to the office; but his political and polemical views were of so decided a character, that we are entitled to believe that they were not repugnant, at any rate, to the Sutton burgesses. His tragical story is so well known that the only particular which it is necessary to add is that a very curious portrait, supposed to represent him, of which an engraving and description will be found in Shaw's Staffordshire, was bought more than a hundred years ago at Drayton by Mr. Chadwick, and remained at Newhall until 1881, when it was purchased by Mr. Tonks, of the Rookery House, Sutton.

The list of the Corporation in 1619 is given in the "Visitation of Warwickshire" printed by the Harleian Society, Thomas Taylor being warden, and two vacancies existing in the list of

members, who were George Pudsey, Esq., Edward Willoughby, Esq., Kenelme Yardley, Gent., Geo. Heath, John Blaskham (Blakham), Richard Sharp, William Fisher, John Scott, Ralph Cooper, John Heath, Christopher Veisey, Thomas Best, Robert Holmes, Richard Turner, Thomas Bull, John Holioke, John Heath, William Swift, John Hall, Thomas Bissell, Randolph Spooner, Thomas Brookes. The Corporation had already undergone some litigation, for in 1581 William Taylor and other inhabitants cited Thomas Gibbons and others before the Star Chamber Court, alleging that they had appropriated six or seven hundred acres to their own use, at a rent of only twopence an acre to the Corporation, had made other grants to themselves, and had stocked the park with strangers' cattle, and spoiled the woods, and employed the revenue to their private use. A commission was issued to Sir Fulke Greville (member for the county, and afterwards Lord Brooke) and others, to examine into these accusations, but their decision only went to direct the enclosures to be made good, to provide that no further enclosure should be made except by the assent of the Corporation and the greater part of the freeholders; that cottages built since the death of Bishop Vesey should not have right of common pasture, and that anyone turning strangers' cattle into the park should lose their privileges. Enclosures not exceeding an acre were excepted from the order.

In 1617, Robert Blakesley exhibited a bill in the Court of Exchequer against the Corporation, charging them with having employed the profits of the estate to their own use, and that they had sold the king's manor house, the stone, timber, glass, lead, &c., and the lands, mills, pools and park, and had wasted his majesty's woods to the value of £1,000, and conveyed away farms and tenements, reserving a rent of £10 per annum, to the overthrow of the free school; and within three years had consumed the underwood in Lindridge and Sidnall (Signal) Hay containing 40 acres, by putting cattle therein, and had converted one hundred acres of common pasture into tillage, reserving a yearly rent, whereby the poor lost the benefit of common, had made free many of the customary tenants, and had sold away 1,000 acres, and had kept in their hands lands escheated to the manor, affirming themselves to be lords thereof, and had received to the value of £10,000 for the bargains, without employing it according to their charter, and continued selling and converting lands to their own use.

The Corporation denied the maladministration charged against them, on which a commission was directed to Sir E. Bromley (of Baginton), knight, and others, who decreed that the award of Sir Fulke Greville should be confirmed, and that all grants and conveyances made according to it should stand. That the Corporation might enclose and preserve the coppices, and

that they might set out from time to time portions of the waste ground for tillage, for which the following rules should be observed, first, that the poorest inhabitants should have one-third of this enclosure, for getting of corn, and should choose on which side of the enclosure their parts should be, so that all the portions of the poor lay together and were well fenced for the allotted period; and the Corporation and freeholders might use the allotted rest in tillage according to their proportions, and should properly fence their lots; second, no part of ground should be burned; third, all the grounds should be well manured and tilled; fourth, these lands should not be tilled more than four years; lastly, that there should be paid yearly to the Corporation two-pence an acre for these lands; also that no more cottages should be built on the wastes, unless sparingly, for the relief of poor and impotent people; that all persons inhabiting cottages built on the wastes in the lifetime of the Bishop might have the same and their commons, according to custom; but that cottages erected since his death should be pulled down, as soon as the tenants died or vacated them, and any of the wastes that had been enclosed to them should be restored to the common.

The commissioners found that the lands of the yearly value of one hundred marks given for the maintenance of the school, had been by former wardens and corporations made away with, so that there was only £10 yearly for the schoolmaster; by which the school, which had been so famous, was almost destroyed. The commissioners therefore advised that the Corporation should commence a suit for the recovery of these alienated lands, or for the obtaining of a reasonable rent for the maintenance of the master, according to the intent of the founder; and as regarded Blakesley, the plaintiff, they found he was no inhabitant of Sutton Coldfield, nor interested in the things of which he complained; and yet he had molested the Corporation with suits in law, the fourteen years last past, not upon any just ground of suit, nor intending the good of the Corporation, but only seeking his own ends, to erect a cottage and enclose sixty acres of land for his own private benefit, directly contrary to the award of Sir Fulke Greville; and the commissioners were of opinion that Blakesley had by his contentious proceedings rather deserved punishment than praise, and therefore ordered good costs against him. The court ordered that the report of the commissioners should be confirmed. ("Forest and Chase," p. 146.) It may be noted here that the Bracebridge Pool was constructed by Ralph Bracebridge in the reign of Henry VI, and was granted by the Corporation in fee to Thomas Barlier (Barker?) of Sutton Coldfield, tailor, in 1577. In 1641 it belonged to Sir Francis Willoughby. That Keeper's Pool was made by Holte, ranger in James 1st's time, and that in 1604 the Corporation made a grant in perpetuity to Edward Pudsey, Esq., of Langley Mill Pool at the rent

of 5s.;* Powell's Pool also is supposed to have been originally embanked by one of the Gibbons family.

But while the Corporation thus made a fairly successful defence as to their mode of administering the manorial property, the school estate was the subject of a reversal of their authority. To quote Dugdale's history, when commenting upon the dismissal of Nowell—"How long these trustees (the Corporation), continued so jealous for the good of the school I cannot affirm; perhaps while the Bishop lived. Sure I am that to such a height of covetousness they did in time grow, that to prevent the Schoolmasters from enjoying what was justly due to them, they contrived to elect them of the Corporation before they could be acquainted with their right, so that having made leases of their land to their children or friends, for small rents received, it should not be in the schoolmaster's power, being so bound up as one of that body politic, to question the same. Thus was the pious intent of the well-meaning founder abused, till that the fraud was discovered, and remedy had, by a chancery decree at the prosecution of John Michael, then master of the school, Lord Coventry being keeper of the seals.†

The effect of these decrees in 1634 and 1640 was to take the school estates out of the hands of the Corporation, and to commit them to a body of trustees, thirteen at least, of the "honest and sufficient inhabitants within twenty miles of Sutton," who were to exercise all the power of granting leases, &c., as by the original foundation, seven of these trustees to be nominated by the master. In 1659 there were, according to a letter from Sir William Dugdale to Mr. Fetherston, of Packwood, but five trustees, viz, these two gentlemen, Mr. Fisher Dilke, of Shustoke, Mr. Pudsey, of Langley, and "one of his neighbours at Sutton." These gentlemen elected a Mr. Chancy, from Bosworth School, to a vacancy which had occurred by the death of the last master, probably John Elley, B.A., Fellow of Kings College, Cambridge, elected in 1647, in succession to William Hill on his preferment to the mastership of St. Patrick's School, Dublin. Hill was Fellow of Merton, Oxford, and had married a daughter of Dr. John Burges. (The "Forest and Chase" mentions John Savage as master in 1639, who must have succeeded John Michael), Mr. Chancy died at Sutton in 1687.

The school had, however, obtained a name which will be remembered wherever English classics are read, as having had a

* **Note.**—A most interesting publication from a note book of this Edward Pudsey's, containing Shakespearian extracts, has been issued by Mr. Richard Savage, of Stratford-on-Avon, the Secretary and Librarian of Shakespeare's birth-place. From notes of money transactions with Mr. Edward Bassett, and "My brother Bassett," in 1615-16, he appears to have been connected with that family, who were long residents in this neighbourhood.

† **Note.**—Sir Thomas Coventry, Knight, created Baron Coventry, 1629, Lord Chancellor to 1639, succeeded by Sir John Finch.

share in the education of William Burton, author of the "Anatomy of Melancholy," in which work he speaks of his schooldays here. His elder brother, the Leicestershire historian, was also a scholar of the school.

The Puritan cause must have been much strengthened at Sutton by the presentation to the Rectory, in 1635, of another clergyman of same name as the late rector, but neither related to him, nor to Dr. Cornelius Burges, though a fellow-townsmen of the latter.

Anthony Burges, a fellow of Emmanuel College, where Sir Wolston Dixie had endowed certain fellowships with land at Sutton, was the son of a schoolmaster at Watford, in Hertfordshire, and was distinguished at the university both by learning and character. In 1642, from the troubled state of the country, and the near approach of the royal army—for it was on the 16th and 17th of October of that year that King Charles I stayed at Aston Hall, and met his Shropshire adherents at a spot on Barr Common which still bears the title of King's Standing—Mr. Burges thought it well to consult his safety by retiring to Coventry and shortly afterwards to London, where he was appointed lecturer at St. Lawrence, Jewry, where he preached before the Lord Mayor, 1644. Several sermons of his are extant, preached in that year and two following, before the Houses of Lords and Commons, the Court Martial, &c., &c. His 145 sermons upon the 17th chapter of St. John, and half-a-dozen other folios of grave divinity attest his diligence and piety; but though the Crown had presented James Fleetwood, of Kings College, Cambridge (Bishop of Worcester in 1675), to the Rectory, as void, the predominance of the parliamentary party soon enabled Burges to return to Sutton without opposition, and to continue his ministry until 1662, although he visited London to preach before the Lord Mayor as late as 1656. He was certainly a widely celebrated preacher, and in 1657 one of his funeral discourses on the death of a Staffordshire minister obtained a popularity which is reported to have been unprecedented even in that sermon-hearing era. His personal character was of the highest. He was earnestly pressed by Bishop Hacket to accept a post of distinction in the Church after the restoration of Charles II, and was recommended for the Bishopric of Hereford, but his objection to the episcopal form of church government prevented him from accepting the Act of 1662, and he retired to Tamworth, where he died in 1664. It does not appear that Dr. Fleetwood, who had followed King Charles's fortunes, and been presented on the restoration to a benefice in Hertfordshire, and appointed provost of King's College, Cambridge, made any claim to the Rectory to which he had once been nominated, and a Dr. William Watson succeeded

Burges at the Rectory, which he held for 27 years.*

Although Sutton lay in the near neighbourhood of some of the most stirring scenes of the civil war between King Charles and his Parliament, no blood was spilt within the boundaries of the parish, although a sharp skirmish took place on the 12th of September, 1642, at Curdworth, between the Parliamentary forces and a Royal detachment, who had been sent from Mount Sorrel to bring off the garrison of Kenilworth, hemmed in between Lord Brooke at Warwick and the Roundheads of Coventry reinforced by a contingent from Birmingham. The Cavaliers were successful. On the 27th of February following, Lord Brooke marched from Coleshill to Lichfield, where he lost his life on the 2nd March. But in June of the same year, Tamworth Castle fell into the hands of the Parliament; and "Fox the tinker," at Edgbaston, with his garrison, in 1644, saw the Parliament supreme in this district. If the letter from Cromwell to Captain Eyre, of Wolverhampton—preserved in the Salt collection—be genuine, Cromwell himself was in the town of Sutton with his troops on the 27th August, 1643; and unquestionably in the month of April of that year some of Prince Rupert's troops, if not the commander himself, must have passed through the town on their way from Birmingham, after a severe encounter with the inhabitants, to Lichfield. In 1645 a part of the Scots army must have marched through the town on July 5th, when they went from Tamworth to Birmingham; and in August, 1648, some of the parishioners might have seen the Scots prisoners from the Duke of Hamilton's army, defeated at Preston, devouring cabbage stalks and carrot tops for hunger, as they were driven along the road to London to be sold as slaves to the American plantations. But these are the inseparable conditions of war, and with the exception of an entry in Sir William Dugdale's diary in 1653—"We now began to watch our corn every night" (for fear of marauders, it may be surmised)—there is nothing to show a disturbed state of the ordinary life of this part of the country, Sutton throve throughout this period. The parish registers begin in 1603, and during the first twenty years there were 645 baptisms and 501 burials. In 1630 there were 298 houses in the parish. In 1636, when the tax called ship-money was imposed, Sutton paid £80, Birmingham £100, Coventry £266. In 1653 Dennis Sympson takes a house and baker's shop at Sutton from Richard Greaves, of Moseley, at an annual rent of £16, "also yearly to yield and pay one capon." In 1655 when collections were made by authority in the churches for the relief of the distressed Protestants of Piedmont, Sutton

* In Mr. Timmins' pamphlet, "Centenary of Birmingham Library, 1879," is the following allusion to Mr. Burges:—"The first mention of any library or catalogue in connection with Birmingham occurs as early as 1637, when one Mr. Roberts (a curate to a Rev. Mr. Burgis) is described 'as now residing near Birmingham, that is much infested with the sickness,' and is honourably mentioned as one upon whose assistance and ingenuity in the drawing of a catalogue Mr. Burgis doth much rely."

Coldfield gave £14, Birmingham £15 11s. 2d., Aston £4 14s. 2d.

It is quite possible that some Royalists whose sympathies were more with the practical than the sentimental side of monarchy began to regret the restoration, when the unprincipled carelessness of the court and the corruption of officials led to exactions of a new and unwished-for character. One of the schemes for extracting money from corporations at this time was granting them new charters, and in 1662 Charles the Second graciously conferred that privilege on the town of Sutton. It was, however, too transparent a device simply to restore powers which had never lapsed, so in addition to confirming all the privileges granted by Henry VIII, or by other prescription lawfully enjoyed, the new Charter authorised the appointment by and from the corporation of two persons of the more honest and discreet men of the society, to be called capital burgesses, and to assist the warden in the administration of justice in all cases except those of life or limb. George Pudsey, of Langley, and his son, Henry, were the first nominated to hold the office during their lives and residence in the Manor. By this Charter it was also provided that the warden might carry a white staff, a matter of more importance than at first sight it would appear—as it signified that he exercised within his own jurisdiction the full authority of a sheriff, and as he was also coroner his powers were both ample and complete.

The appointment of a steward learned in the law, to hold the court leets and view of frank pledge; a court of record to be held every Monday “to determine all suits, complaints, trespasses, debts, covenants, &c.,” as prescribed in the first charter, had become, as in other boroughs, the excuse for electing some member of Parliament or influential neighbour, who might advocate the interests of the Corporation at the Metropolis. The Earl of Essex had died in 1646, and I have not been able to find any record of his immediate successor. In 1679 the office was conferred upon Thomas Thynne, Esq., of Drayton Bassett, M.P. for the University of Oxford, who was created Viscount Weymouth, 1682.

CHAPTER V

The coming of the Riland Family to the Rectory—Dr. Sacheverell
—Increase of the Town and plans for its improvement

ALTHOUGH candour requires that we should admit the corrupt administration of Charles II, there is no doubt of the effect which the restoration of national tranquility had upon the general prosperity of the country. Sutton Coldfield, a healthy and retired village, became a favourite residence of men who in those days of change had found themselves unable to agree with the prevailing opinion, or who preferred a private station to the sacrifice of principle which public life demanded. Thus our

churchyard, though in an unmarked grave, holds the bones of the pious John Ley, once Vicar of Solihull, and before that President of Sion College, Clerk to the Convocation of the Clergy, and Sub-Dean of Chester Cathedral. This good man retired here in broken health and died in 1662; and in 1676, another more eminent scholar and writer, the estimable and erudite John Ray, selected Sutton as a residence, upon the death of his patron and pupil, Francis Willughby, with whom he had lived at Middleton Hall. He soon left Sutton for his native county, Essex, so that we do not enjoy the credit of having to 'claim his works, "The wisdom of God manifested," and other standard treatises of science and theology, as written at Sutton. Both these worthies belonged to the Puritan, or as it grew now to be called, the Nonconformist party, and that it had other adherents here is evidenced by the licensing in 1672 of the house of Samuel Stevenson for Presbyterian worship, but the prevalent tone of the town and neighbourhood was (to judge by the election of Thomas Thynne to be steward of the Corporation) veering round to the High Church party. This was occasioned in no small degree by the alteration in the sentiments of the patron and rector.

John Shilton, the original purchaser of the advowson, had married a daughter of Francis Stanley, the squire of West Bromwich, and left two sons—Robert, who, as has been mentioned, presented Anthony Burges to the rectory; and Richard, a lawyer, who was for some time Attorney General to King Charles the First, and was knighted. From this Sir Richard, his nephew John Shilton, inherited a considerable fortune, and became Lord of the Manors of West Bromwich and Wednesbury. He was High Sheriff of Staffordshire in 1660, and presented Dr. Watson to Sutton rectory on Burges' resignation, so that if not an active he was a passive adherent of Church and King. But the fortunes of the family began now to decline, and were embarrassed by the marriage of this gentleman's widow to Dr. Walter Needham, who, together with his stepson, another John Shilton, mortgaged Wednesbury to Sir Anthony Keck, and otherwise disposed of the property; in fact the family were involved in utter ruin, and the daughters of the elder Shilton had none of the portion left by their father's will paid. Under these circumstances, John Riland, who had married one of the sisters, Katherine, and been presented by his brother-in-law to the rectory of Sutton in 1689, on Dr. Watson's death, undertook to pay off a mortgage on the advowson, and to accept it as his wife's portion.

John Riland was the grandson of a substantial yeoman of Over Quinton, in Gloucestershire, whose son of the same name became fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1641, and was rector of the small Crown living of Exhall, near Alcester. Although he submitted to the authority of the Parliamentary visitors at Oxford, he was turned out of his fellowship and

his rectory with circumstances of unusual harshness; his books were stolen, and a pistol snapped in his face. Consequently when the tide turned, he was regarded as a sufferer for the good cause, and quickly promoted. Bishop Hacket, when appointed to the See of Lichfield and Coventry, made John Riland his Archdeacon, and presented him to the important rectory of Birmingham, where he continued until his death, in his 63rd year, in 1672. His monument exists at St. Martin's, and confirms the character given by his son, in these words, "He was a very learned, humble, peaceable, and heavenly-minded man; of unwearied application in the study of the Scriptures and the primitive fathers in the original languages, making large extracts, all of which were lost in the general ravage. He was constant in his devotions in public and private, and conducted worship with plainness of speech and deportment: There was such a strictness in his life and conversation, that he was called in Birmingham, the holy man: he frequently paid from his own purse the sums disputed by two parties, and he laboured to reconcile those who were at variance. When he gave away a dole in the Church, he called the poor together to a discourse, which he made suitable to their circumstances, and on such occasions many of the chief inhabitants assembled to avail themselves of his edifying sermon."

Archdeacon Riland married Cecilia Stanley (probably daughter of William Stanley of West Bromwich) and thus became connected with the Shilton family. His son, John, went to his father's old college in Oxford, where he obtained the tutorship of the students attending Magdalen Hall. He was a prominent opponent of the high-handed proceedings of King James the Second, and resisted the intrusion of his nominee, Dr. Farmer, as President of Magdalen College in 1688; but like several of the leading high-churchmen, Bishop Ken for instance, he maintained his allegiance to the sovereign whose measures he felt bound to oppose, and his presentation to his wife's family living probably relieved him from an embarrassing position in Oxford. He was inducted to Sutton in 1689; in 1701 he determined to erect a rectory house in the fields opposite to the old glebe, and contracted with his builder for a house 45 feet long in front, and 35 feet deep and 23 feet high to the wall plate, for the sum of £239 11s. 3d., to include a wall round a fore court and a garden, the Rector agreeing to provide the timber. This is the older and larger portion of the present Rectory. In 1705 he resisted successfully the raising of his land tax, and in 1706 he became, under the conditions already detailed, patron as well as Rector. His political views would be strengthened by the society in which he moved here. Langley was in the possession of one of the old Roundhead families, the Pudseys, who had inherited it through the fancy of the mature Edith Hore, cousin and heir of

Gilbert Hore, of Langley, for a young Oxford student, Rowland Pudsey, whom she married and endowed with her estates in Oxford and Warwickshire; but the representatives of that family had become reconciled to the monarchy. Jane Pudsey, the widow of the last male representative, Henry, who died in 1677, leaving two daughters co-heiresses, had married William Wilson, builder and architect, of Leicester, the comely and clever young sculptor of the elaborate monument of her first spouse, and had sufficient influence at Court to obtain a knighthood for him in 1681. Wilson was a man of some eminence in his way, and was a pupil of Sir Christopher Wren, who entrusted him with the rebuilding of St. Mary's Church, Warwick, in 1694, "And to him must be attributed the censure and the praise which the fine proportions but incongruous detail of this singular building have so frequently and so loudly called forth."* A statue of the celebrated Marquess of Newcastle, which stood in front of the pile of building erected by the Marquess on the site of old Nottingham Castle, was his work, and was destroyed by the mob in 1831; and he executed for Lichfield Cathedral a tasteless image of Charles the Second, which for nearly two hundred years occupied the post of honour on the west front. The style of his domestic architecture may best be estimated by the house in which he himself resided in Sutton, known at the present day as the Moat House, although the moat has disappeared since 1860, prior to which date the front door was approached from the street by a bridge of stone crossing a sunken area, which in later days had been planted with shrubs. The story goes that his wife's relatives spoke disparagingly of her taste in leaving a moated hall to marry a stonemason, upon which Wilson retorted that he could afford to live in a moated house of his own. Most of the old Sutton houses bear traces of his design, which probably influenced later builders, for a favourite arrangement is one copied from the house I have mentioned, viz.: two alcove-like recesses, one on each side of the fireplace in the principal apartment, elegantly designed, and fitted for the reception of books or china. He died in 1710, and was buried on the outside of the north wall of the church, contiguous to the Pudsey vault, where his lady had been interred. A handsome tablet records his merits, and was restored some years ago by the Masonic body, of which he was (*teste Ashmole*) a distinguished member. Henry Pudsey's daughters and co-heiresses married, the elder, Lord Ffolliot, an Irish peer; and the younger, a Mr. Jesson, of a Coventry family. The Sutton property was divided between them, Langley Hall going to the younger sister, Anne Jesson, while Lord Ffolliot erected a house on the borders of the Park, to which he gave the name of Four

* Noble, in his continuation of Granger, quoting Horace Walpole, says that Francis Smith built the church, and Sir Christopher Wren the tower. But this is palpably a mistake, arising from the fact that before the work was completed, Smith had succeeded Wilson as County Architect.

Oaks Hall.

New Hall had been purchased at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Henry Sacheverell, of Morley and Callow in Derbyshire, and was in 1709 occupied by George, the son of Valens Sacheverell, an enthusiastic Jacobite, who, upon his appointment of High Sheriff of Derbyshire, nominated as his chaplain a namesake, with whom he had become acquainted probably as curate of Cannock. The Rev. Henry Sacheverell, grandson of a silenced nonconformist minister at Marlborough, and educated at the grammar school there by the bounty of a godfather, had proceeded to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he formed a life-long intimacy with Joseph Addison, (who dedicated one of his poems to him), and was considered a promising divine. His zeal, however, betrayed him into delivering at the assizes a sermon of so political a cast, that the sheriff's nephew, Mr. Chadwick, whose father was a strong adherent of the Whig party, could not avoid a comment upon its sentiments, which conveyed his opinion of their treasonable character. Shortly afterwards Dr. Sacheverell was called upon to preach upon the 5th of November, before the Lord Mayor, and in his sermon so pointedly attacked Lord Godolphin, the head of the Whig ministry, that he was arraigned at the instance of the House of Commons for treason. This, however, was the turning point of the struggle between the Whig and Tory parties, in the reign of Queen Anne, and although the House of Lords by a considerable majority—69 votes to 52—found him guilty on March 27th, 1710, they only sentenced him to a three years' suspension, and ordered the obnoxious sermon to be publicly burned. This was regarded as a victory by the Tory party, and Sacheverell made a triumphant progress through the midland and western counties, where he was received by crowds of admirers with every demonstration of enthusiastic homage. Finally, he took up his abode at New Hall, where some of the old panes of glass had for many years Latin texts, with his initials, engraved upon them with a diamond, and on the 20th October, 1714, the Sunday before the coronation of King George the First, he preached at Sutton Church, his congregation being augmented by some two hundred Birmingham Jacobites. "The consequence of it appeared a day or two after," says the historian (Tindal in his continuation of Rapin's History of England), in a riot of the same character as that which disgraced Birmingham nearly eighty years afterwards. The Government wisely took no more notice of Sacheverell's violence, he married his patron's widow, was presented to the rectory of St. Andrew's, Holborn, and like many a popular idol, before and since, was altogether forgotten when the generation of his admirers had given way to a new one.

In 1671 a valuation of the estates in the parish according to a book of one shilling in the pound, made by Thomas Scott, John

Addyes, Abraham Pemberton, Thomas Cotton, Richard Rogerson, Ralph Cooper, William Penn, Richard Turner, and Ben Cockersole, (now preserved at the Rectory), contains seventy-nine names, of which the principal owners are:

Henry Pudsey, Esq., for Langley	£120
Mr. William Wattson, rector, for ye parsonage ..	120
George Sacheverell, Esq., for New Hall and ye lands	113
Mr. Raphael Sedgwick, for house and lands	
at Wildgreen	93
Mr. John Addyes, Moor Hall	61
Leicester Grosvenor, for his house and land ..	58
Margery Stonier, for house and land	50
William Woods, gent., for house and land	50
Mr. Scott, for house and land, Ashfurlong	48
John Reaner, for house and land	48
Mr. John Allporte, for house and land	38
Mr. Thomas Massey	35
Mr. Batchelor and tenants, for ye mills	28
George Catter, for house and land	26
Mr. Powell	24
Mr. George Roake, for his house and land	24
Ambrose Cooper, for house and land	20 10s.
Mr. John Richardson and tenants, for his house	
and lands	18
Mr. Hannum, for house and lands	16
Mr. Gowd. Grosvenor, for his house and lands ..	16
Mr. John Gibbards, for his house and lands ..	15
Michael Farmer	15
Robert Rogerson, for his house and land,	
Brookfields	14
Richard Rogerson, for his house and lands	13
Thomas Dawney, gent., for house and lands	
in his tenure	10

Among the minor sums in the assessment, occur the names of Richard Martin for Eddowcroft (Reddicroft), John Eagles, for Dove Bank (Doe Bank), William Pearsall, for "cross o' th' hand," James Huneybourne, for Swan meadow, Mr. Pargiter, for overplus of Cottage lands' rent, &c., in all £1,331 10s.

In 1698 an account of householders Easter offerings gives in Great Sutton 78, Hill 42, Hill Hooke 28, Little Sutton 38, Moor and Ashfurlong 48, Beyond the Wood 27, Wormley 19, Many and the Wild 42, total 322.

In 1721, the number of families was 360.

Great Sutton	free tenements	88,	cottages	19
Hill and Hill Hooke	do.	37,	do.	30
Little Sutton	do.	23,	do.	18
Moor and Ashfurlong	do.	31,	do.	29
Beyond the Wood	do.	16,	do.	11

Warmley	do.	18,	do.	0
Maney and the Wild	do.	31,	do.	9
		244		116

Beyond the slight disturbance caused by Sacheverell's sermon, Sutton was fortunate enough in escaping any consequences of moment from civil commotion; in 1690 no doubt troops marched and provision waggons rolled along the Chester-road, on their way to William the Third's army in Ireland, and half a century later, in 1746, some part of the Duke of Cumberland's army passed along on their way to Derby, where the Highlanders declined to await their arrival. There is still at the Rectory a silver tea-kettle with the date 1732, which when popular rumour announced the arrival of the Highlanders at Lichfield, was thrown, as well as the rest of the family plate, into the fishpond, and no doubt the appearance of the Royal force gave general satisfaction to the law abiding population. But their passage through the precincts of the town was connected with a tragical incident. The advanced guard being ignorant of the road, made enquiries of a man whom they found near Tyburn. The poor fellow had no roof to his mouth, and the soldiers being unable to understand a word he uttered, pronounced him a spy, and took him as such before the commanding officer. He at once ordered him to be shot. The order was instantly executed, and in further vengeance his head was struck off, and carried on a halbert as far as New Shipton, and there tossed into a tree, the body having been thrown into a ditch in the Echelhurst, just below Pipe Hayes. Singular enough, to confirm the tradition, the body and head were found within a few weeks of each other in the year 1827, the one at the draining of the meadows, where the execution had taken place, the other at the felling of the ruins of one of the finest old oaks in the parish. This anecdote is related in the "Forest and Chase," on the authority of the late Mr. Baron Webster.

In 1715 Mr. Chadwick had succeeded his great-uncle George Sacheverell, at New Hall, taking the name and arms of Sacheverell. This gentleman was paternally descended from an old Lancashire family, of Healey, near Rochdale, who by marriage with the heiress of Cawarden, had become possessed of Mavesyn Ridware, near Lichfield, and of the representation of the ancient Norman family Malvoisin. They had been on the Parliamentary side in the civil war, and were loyal to the Hanoverian succession.

Lord Ffolliot, who built Four Oaks, died in 1716, and his widow in 1744, when the house was sold to Simon Luttrell, of Luttrellstown, in Ireland, and in 1757 Mr. Luttrell wishing to build a new house, obtained the consent of the Corporation and inhabitants to an Act of Parliament for the enclosure of 48 acres

of Sutton Park, and the demolition of Sutton Mills, for which a rent of £6 13s. 4d. was paid. The chief rent for this encroachment was fixed at £12, which is still paid. Mr. Luttrell was a courtier, and a member first of the Irish, and then of the English House of Commons.

The Addyes family, who resided at Moor Hall during this period, do not seem to have taken much part in local or general politics, but the possessor of Canwell, Sir Robert Lawley, and his son, became in the middle of the 18th century important personages in Sutton, Canwell being at that time always regarded as a part of the parish, so much so that banns were asked in Sutton Church, between persons from a distance, and others residing in the "extra-parochial place of Canwell."

John Riland died in 1720; his eldest son, called John after him, was then thirty years of age, but although he had been entered at Oxford, he neither remained there, nor qualified for any public employment by taking the oaths to Government until 1726. The next surviving brother, Richard, also of Magdalen College, succeeded his father in the Rectory, and married Mary, daughter of George Bisse, a Somersetshire squire, whose uncle, Mr. Viner, of Aldershot, Hants., founded the Vinerian law fellowship at Oxford. Richard Riland had two sons by this lady, who both in their turn were rectors of Sutton.

The increasing population of the parish seems to have rendered it necessary to provide assistance in the performance of the clerical duty. Mr. Thomas Allestree (rector of Ashow, and Prebendary of Lichfield) signs a certificate in 1694 as assistant to John Riland. Of this gentleman it is recorded on his monument at Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire, that "he was a minister of the Church of England 54 years, he composed 500 sermons, and preached above 5,000 times." In 1727 Thomas Taylor was curate, and a Mr. Poynton in 1753, and Thomas Bagnall in 1754.

In 1727, the schoolhouse near the church having fallen into disrepair, the Corporation came to an arrangement with Mr. Paul Lowe, the then master, who seems to have succeeded William Sanders about 1724, by which they allowed him £400, that he might build a new schoolroom, and a house on a croft recently purchased by the Corporation. Mr. Lowe undertook to expend £300 on the buildings, stipulating for the free enjoyment of them for his life, and £100 to be paid to his executors, his successor to have the occupation of them for a payment of £5, or the instruction, for that sum, of a class of twelve boys, sons of inhabitants under the age of fourteen, in writing, arithmetic, and English.

In 1730, for the preservation of the boundaries between Sutton Coldfield and Perry Barr, the Corporation set to Francis Gibbons the parcel of waste ground bounded on the east by the highway from Sutton to Perry Barr, on the west by Hawthorn Brook, and on the south by the highway from Sutton to Oscott,

[N.B.—Not the present Oscott, but old Oscott or Maryvale] for the purpose of making a coneygree and a lodge for a keeper, without enclosing it. "This tract," says the author of "Forest and Chase," "has not been preserved to the parish, though the subject of boundary was agitated in 1760, and again in 1801-2." It was reserved for the date of the new charter to give up without a struggle several houses built upon land which had from time immemorial formed part of Sutton, near the present college at New Oscott, to the parish of Handsworth. In Speed's county map (edition 1676) the northern boundary of Warwickshire and of Sutton stretches from Little Hay to the Bourne Brook, and follows the course of the stream as far as the confines of Drayton Park, which will account for Canwell being considered as a member of Sutton.

In 1737 the Corporation ordered certain alms-houses provided under the terms of the charter to be taken down and erected a workhouse, for which they had voted £800. This stood on the site of the present municipal buildings in Mill Street.

This was the age of benefactions, and several of the doles and charities in the borough date from the reign of Queen Anne. One which deserves particular mention connects the spirit of pious churchmanship which at that period founded the oldest Bible Society, the venerable Society for promoting Christian knowledge, and afterwards inaugurated the comprehensive scheme of local education by which Sutton has so much benefited. John Wilkins, in 1707, left a parcel of ground, now known as the Bible land, to the rector of Sutton Coldfield to distribute religious books by way of reward to such poor children and other indigent inhabitants of Sutton Coldfield, as should have been publicly catechized in the parish church. This distribution is still made on or about the 23rd October, in accordance with the will of the founder.

In 1739, the Corporation agreed to give certain rents to the repair of the church, and in 1757 to appropriate £737 to new pewing it. This measure, however, led to a larger work, which will be more conveniently treated of in the next chapter, as also will the proposals to bring Sutton into more direct communication with Birmingham and Lichfield to neither of which places any direct and traversable road then existed.

CHAPTER VI

Turnpike Roads and Enclosure Acts, proposed and rejected—
Richard and John Riland—The Corporation Revenues,
Constitution and Government

PERIODS of history divide themselves in a great measure as the lives of leading men are shortened or prolonged. One of the most definite cycles of Sutton history is the incumbency of the two brothers Riland, the last rectors of the name, the elder

of whom was instituted two years before the commencement, and the younger died two years after the conclusion of the long reign of George III. They were both men of vigorous individuality, well suited for the days in which their lot was cast. The elder will be best remembered by what he did, the younger by what he taught: but both assisted, as it will be seen, in the development of the town at an era of the greatest importance in its history.

Richard Bisse Riland succeeded his father in the Rectory in 1758, at a time when the Corporation had just decided to spend a considerable sum of money upon repairing and repewing the church. This is stated by the writer of an anonymous description of Sutton Coldfield (date 1762) to have been done at the suggestion of the Rector, but as the resolution to apply a sum of money to the purpose was originally come to in 1739, and the specific sum of £737 was allotted for the purpose in 1758, it is more probable that the deviation from the original design is the suggestion of the pamphleteer. But during the repair, the foundation of the nave was found to be so insecure that a much greater amount of rebuilding than was originally contemplated became necessary, the whole of the pillars and arches had to be reinstated, and the roof renewed, so that the Corporation fitted up the side aisles of the chancel for public worship: Vesey's round arches being adopted as the model for the new building. All the windows were filled with mullions of very poor design, and the church ceiled throughout, substantially pewed, and fitted with galleries in the taste of the period. One of these, in the south aisle, was erected by the Rector's uncle, John Riland, jointly with Joseph Duncumb, and Mary Riland, widow, at a cost of £118 6s. 8d.; and as it is still in existence, and in good repair, it is evident that Mr. William Hiorn, with whom they contracted for its erection, did his work well. The tower was also now partitioned off from the church by a brick wall, in the lower part of which a round arch was turned, below the original pointed one, to match the aisles; and the two westernmost arches on both sides the nave were built of a smaller span than the rest, in order that they might support a large gallery appropriated to the family of Lord Irnham, by which title the owner of Four Oaks had been advanced to the Irish peerage. In the same gallery room was found for an organ, which was provided at the cost of the Rector's younger brother and curate, John Riland, the eminent musician Dr. John Alcock being appointed organist; on the north side of the church there was another gallery, which was chiefly appropriated to the Grammar School, and this was joined to the west gallery by a return, containing the pews of the Canwell family and household. A handsome pulpit of inlaid oak, surmounted by an elaborate sounding-board with a dome of fretwork above it, stood in a large reading-pew in the chancel, and the

eredos of dark oak wainscot covered the lower part of the east window. This last ornament is now in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall, having been presented to the old Corporation by the present Rector in 1863. The vestry was in the south-east corner of the church, where the organ now stands. A clock and chimes were also provided. Unfortunately these improvements were not carried out without a certain degree of dispute and litigation. The Corporation put forth in 1763 a statement, that unauthorised persons were attempting to seize the new seats, and appropriate them to themselves, and empowered the deputy-steward to defend suits which had been commenced in the spiritual court at Lichfield, by these intruders. In 1766 a commission was issued, and a faculty prepared to assign the seats, under which they were held until the last repewing in 1874.

The population of the town and manor is stated in 1762 to be 1,800; the number of christenings for 20 years to Christmas, 1761, being 747, burials 694, and year by year a larger portion of land round Sutton came under cultivation, while other improvements were effected or contemplated. There had been a flour mill in the Park since 1750, on the pool made by John Riland the elder, and in 1759 Messrs. Homer and Duncumb obtained permission to make the Blackroot pool, with a view of establishing a leather mill there, for which they had a lease for 42 years, at an annual rent of 2s., it containing 15 acres. Spade mills were also set up in various parts of the parish, and in 1754 a perpetual lease had been granted of the marshy ground to the south of the town, now known as Holland, to Joseph Oughton, of Birmingham, who set up a mill for gun barrels. "Some rivulets which take their rise in this park feed several mills built in and near it, not only for grinding corn, but for boring musket barrels, polishing metal buttons, making saws, grinding axes, knives, bayonets, and performing various other operations for the mechanical traders in Birmingham." ("Gentleman's Magazine," September, 1762). Another improvement was that contemplated by Humphrey Minchin, who rented Little Aston Hall in 1765, and modernized the grounds;* in 1767 he obtained leave from the Corporation to plant trees in the waste for ornament; Mr. Luttrell also (Lord Irnham) and Sir Robert Lawley were planters of trees, and their example was generally followed. "Hunting and shooting," says the writer in the "Gentleman's Magazine," "are the principal diversions, there being a great many foxes, hares and partridges; the large ponds also afford wild ducks and teal;" while the author of the anonymous pamphlet supplements the information that six packs of hounds were kept in the neighbourhood.

All this time, however, no direct and well contrived com-

* This gentleman, says Sanders in his History of Shenstone, was the first person in this country to use palliasses under feather beds.

munication existed either with Lichfield or Birmingham. On the south the crooked road led down to the Skinner's Pools, and up a steep incline by the Cup Inn, and the stone house at Maney, to the edge of the Coldfield, along which it straggled by Wild Green to a narrow lane leading across the Chester Road towards Erdington. On the north also a tortuous and narrow road led to Mere Pool, and thence up the village of Hill to the common which occupied the slope towards Lichfield; but when a turnpike road was proposed, a printed paper was circulated containing "indisputable reasons" why the poor farmers would be reduced to ruin if a turnpike was erected in the neighbourhood. Judging from the fact that the first Act of Parliament for a road from Watford Gap to Birmingham was only passed in the 47th year of George III (1807), it would seem that this opposition proved successful in deferring the proposal.

The Rector of Sutton who (as his correspondence at college shows)* associated with men of extended views and enlarged knowledge of the world, often found himself in the minority when public improvements were proposed, for which the general opinion was not ripe. This was conspicuously the case with regard to the first scheme for an enclosure of the commons, agitated in 1778. At that period the Corporation of Sutton seems to have been curiously constituted; about half of the twenty-four members were farmers or tradesmen of the town, men who in some cases were scarcely able to write their own names, but at the same time a custom had arisen of electing some of the neighbouring gentry, not only those who, like the Sacheverells, Floyers, and Chadwicks, of New Hall, the Jessons, of Langley, and the Addyes and Hackets, of Moor Hall, resided in the parish, but also others connected with it by property, as the Lawleys, of Canwell and Hackets of Moxhull; and even men less nearly concerned with its affairs, as Sir Charles Holte, of Aston Hall, and Dr. Spencer, Vicar of Aston; Mr. Hoo, of Great Barr; and Mr. (afterwards Sir Joseph) Scott who succeeded to the last named property. It was Mr. Scott, a man of a speculative and sanguine turn, who suggested the enclosure of the whole of the waste and common land, including Sutton Park, which was comprised within the boundaries of the parish of Sutton Coldfield; and having obtained the support of Mr. Hacket and of the Rector, framed a plan for carrying out his proposals. These were mainly on the lines of the ordinary Enclosure Acts, viz.—a division of the open fields among the freeholders in proportion to their interest in the soil; but contained also provisions for a complete extinction of tithes, present or prospective, in lieu of an allotment of land; for future church extension, viz.: building chapels at Hill and Walmley, and providing curates; for the making of new roads; and another provision (noted in the margin of the Rector's copy

* See letters of Ratcliffe and James—Oxford Historical Society, 1887.

"Rowton well") for the preservation of and for access to all mineral and medicinal springs and waters. In some respects this scheme shows much foresight, though it would very likely have broken down under its own elaborate machinery; but it was very summarily crushed. A meeting was held at the Three Tuns Inn, on the 22nd April, 1778, at which 158 names were subscribed as opponents of an enclosure, and although the promoters published a list of eighty-seven names of proprietors who they claimed as favourable to their views, and as representing larger interests in the parish than the former list, it is evident that they had miscalculated their strength, for the Corporation in the same month passed by a vote of 17 to 3, a resolution that the "Design of applying to Parliament for leave to bring in a bill for enclosing 'the Park waste, Common and Commonable lands within the parish of Sutton' is an unjustifiable attack upon the undoubted rights and privileges of the Corporation, seems calculated to wrest from them their property and estate solemnly granted and confirmed to them by Charter, and will tend eventually to dissolve their existence as a body corporate. That this Corporation will oppose such application in Parliament."

The three votes recorded against this resolution were those of Mr. Scott, Mr. Riland, and his curate, Mr. Roberts. Mr. Hacket was not a member of the Corporation, and after issuing a short address in defence of his views, withdrew the obnoxious proposal.

It may not be out of place here to notice two events of some bearing upon the welfare of the parish. Lord Irnham had in 1778 sold Four Oaks to Dr. Gresley, having found it necessary to retrench his expenses. He went back to Ireland, where in 1786 he was created Earl of Carhampton. He had always been a very obsequious courtier, and in the early days of King George III, one of his sons, Colonel Luttrell, was the ministerial candidate for Middlesex in opposition to the popular demagogue John Wilkes; but in 1771 an event occurred in his family which placed him in a position of antagonism to the Court. He had a lovely daughter, Anne, who married a Derbyshire Squire, Mr. Horton, of Catton, and as his widow, on October 4th, 1771, took for her second husband George III's youngest brother, Henry, Duke of Cumberland. The King, whose other brother, the Duke of Gloucester, had also married a subject, the Dowager Countess of Waldegrave, refused to receive the Duchess of Cumberland, and finally obtained the passing of the Royal Marriage Act forbidding any member of the royal family from marrying in England without permission of the Crown.

In 1774 a severely contested election for the Parliamentary representation of the county of Warwick took place, commencing on the 20th and terminating on the 31st October, the three candidates being Sir Charles Holte, Mr. Skipwith, and Mr. Mordaunt.

The contest was actually between the first and last of these gentlemen, Holte obtaining 1,845 votes to Mordaunt's 1,787, Skipworth, who was practically unopposed, polling 2,954. Sutton gave Holte 107 votes and Mordaunt 3, the trio being all non-residents, Thomas Alport, of Brickton Lodge, Salop; William Eaves, of Stratford; and Thomas Whitehead, of Wedgnoek. I will give the list of names of the residents as they appear on the printed poll book, many of which will be recognised as existing in the present day: Austin, Baylis, Bampton, Bill, Bickley, Breedon, Bunn, Butler, Curson, Crump, Chaddock (Sacheverell Charles), Duncomb, Dudley, Ensor, Earp, Farmer, Gibbons, Grange, Gannett, Griffiths, Hackett (John, Gent., and Andrew, sen., Esq.), Hall, Horton, Hargrave, Holmes, Homer, Jones, Kempson, Kendrick, Lawley (Robert, Esq.), Lynes, Lakin, Lucas, Leek, Lambley, Lee, Mortimer, Oughton, Peat, Parker, Rochford, Ryland, Richards, Smith, Stickley, Swift, Taylor, Winstanley, Webb, Worthington, Wharton, Yeomans. More than a third of the names are those of out-voters.

The following description of the parish in 1772 is from the pen of the Rev. R. B. Riland, addressed to his Diocesan, the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. "The parish of Sutton Coldfield is nearly of an oval figure, whose longest diameter is seven miles, and shortest four, it comprehends several hamlets, viz., Maney, Hill, Little Sutton, Warmley, and Wigginshill, besides several single farmhouses and cottages dispersed at considerable distances from each other and from the church. The whole number of houses is nearly 376. The families of note are those of Simon Luttrell, Lord Irnham, at Four Oaks Hall, Charles Sacheverell Chadwick, Esq., of New Hall, R. Lawley, Esq., only son of Sir R. L. Bart, A. Hacket, Esq., John Hacket, Esq., of Moor Hall, second son of the former (the lineal descendants of Bishop H. of Lichfield and Coventry), T. Duncomb, Esq., W. Jesson, Esq.; and many other gentlemen.

"There are three Roman Catholic families in my parish, the master of one of them is a carpenter, and hath several children, the other two are day labourers. But none have been lately perverted to popery, nor is there any place in my parish where they assemble to worship. No Popish priest hath resorted to the parish of late years, or exercised any ministerial functions that I know of.

"There is only one family of Quakers in my parish, and a meeting house at the aforesaid hamlet called Wigginshill, but a congregation is very seldom assembled there, the building being small and ill convenient. I know of no Anabaptists nor Moravians in my parish, nor of any Presbyterians who abstain from the church as such, there is one meeting house of Independents within the town of Sutton Coldfield, which is duly licensed at the sessions, whither they who are called Methodists do also resort,

to the amount (I believe) of eight or ten families, and their number is rather increased lately, because they have now a regular teacher, Mr. Abraham Austin.

"I constantly reside upon my Cure and in the parsonage house. I have also a curate residing in the parish, Mr. Jer. Roberts, late of Merton College in Oxon., who being already licensed within the diocese, proposes soon to request your lordship's favour to transfer his license for the purpose of his remaining at this church. He serves no other Cure, is in Priest's orders, and his salary is £50 per annum.

(Mr. Roberts remained at Sutton Coldfield until 1779, when he became a minor canon of Worcester, and was succeeded at Sutton by the Rev. F. Blick. One of the preceding curates, the Rev. J. Brailsford, had been elected to the head-mastership of Birmingham school in 1766.)

"Two sermons have been preached every Lord's Day in this church ever since I have been incumbent thereof. The sacrament of ye Lord's Supper is administered on the three great festivals, and on the 1st Sunday in every month. But the people are very negligent in their attendance upon it, inasmuch as not more than 120 usually communicate at ye festivals, and at each of ye monthly sacraments not more than 70. Prayers are read on all holidays, on each Saturday preceding the Lord's Supper, on every Wednesday and Friday throughout the year, and twice a day during Passion Week. There is no chapel in this parish. I catechise in church in Lent, and sometimes (tho' but very seldom) at other seasons, the people willingly send their children, but not their adult servants. In explaining it I only use an extempore exposition, but sometimes distribute a few of "Lewis's Catechism" in the parish, I believe all who frequent the church have been baptised either by the Dissenters or the Church of England.

"There is a school for grammar and rhetoric in the town, free for all the parish, founded by John Harman, alias Vesey, Bishop of Exeter, Temp. Hen. VIII. The governors are about a dozen of ye neighbouring gentlemen, who I believe carefully preserve and duly employ the revenues, and observe all the material statutes and ordinances. The said revenues arise out of certain adjacent farms, and are considerable, but to what amount, not being a governor, I cannot exactly set forth.

"There is no hospital or alms house of any sort in the parish.

"There is no school of this sort (for the poor) in the parish."

This reproach, however, was soon to be wiped away, as in December, 1778, the Corporation voted £30 to be paid to Mr. Riland to find a person to teach reading to poor children of the parish, and although, from the account rendered by the rector, the attendance seems to have been but small and fluctuating, yet a beginning was made for enlarged educational work.

With regard to the grammar school it may be here convenient to mention that Mr. Lowe, who had for some years been superannuated, died in 1764, and was succeeded by William Webb, B.A., of Brasenose College. In 1782, the surviving trustees were Andrew Hacket, Andrew Hacket, jun., Thomas Hoo, John Hodgetts and Miller Sadler, who proceeded to appoint Richard Geast (afterwards Dugdale) of Blyth, Charles Bowyer Adderley, of Hams, Wriothesly Digby of Meriden, Ralph Floyer of Hints, William Tennant of Little Aston, S. S. Perkins of Orton-on-the-Hill, John Hacket of Moor Hall, Charles Oakes of Tamworth, William Dilke of Maxtoke, John Ludford of Ansley, Joseph Oughton of Sutton, Richard Sadler of Over Whitacre, and Edward Sadler of Castle Bromwich.

The literary reputation of the school certainly stood high under Mr. Webb, and he enjoyed the distinction of having under his charge for a short time a poet of early ability, and of taste which matured with his years, the Rev. H. F. Cary, best known as the translator of Dante, Librarian of the British Museum till his death in 1844. Young Cary, who had also been at Rugby and Birmingham Schools, was residing at Sutton while he attended the latter, and was a frequent contributor even in those days to the poetical pages of the "Gentleman's Magazine."

The society of Sutton at that time had a strong bias to elegant literature. The Rector's fellow prebendaries at Lichfield—Mr. Inge for instance, who had been for a time a curate at Sutton—were in the habit of corresponding with their Sutton friends on topics of criticism or general information, and in 1782 Mr. Blick, who has been mentioned as becoming curate in 1779, obtained leave to fit up the lower part of the Town Hall for the use of a book society recently formed, towards which improvement the Corporation contributed £20. The Corporation, indeed, were very generous in promoting public objects; they more than once contributed to the organist's salary, and in 1784 they voted 100 guineas for a new ring of bells in the parish church, which were placed there in 1786. For some reason or other these did not give satisfaction, and in 1795 six new bells, by Mears (of London), were hung in the tower, which are still in use; though some have been recast, and two added by Taylor (of Loughborough).

In 1774 the Rector took a census of the inhabitants of the parish with the following result, stated by himself:—

"Number of freehold houses 53, cottages 106. Total number of inhabitants, 2,587.

"Annual average of burials for several years past is 49, which is annually one inhabitant out of 50 37/49ths.

"Number of houses 485, but as there are 19 lodgers or addi-

tional separate families, the whole number of separate families is 504.

"Annual average of births 88
burials 49

—

therefore 39 emigrate annually.

"Population of inhabitants to a house 5 $\frac{1}{4}$.

As this is a history of Sutton, and not of the Riland family, we have only to deal with Richard Bisse Riland as Rector of Sutton, or his position in the town of Birmingham, where he took an active part in the charitable, the magisterial, and the social development of the place, would be worthy of notice. He died, after a short illness, in 1790, in his 57th year, and the obituary paragraphs in "Aris's Birmingham Gazette" and the "Gentleman's Magazine" sufficiently indicate the esteem in which he was held. He left two daughters: the elder married Mr. Bedford, a Birmingham solicitor; the younger subsequently became the wife of a Bedfordshire gentleman named Williamson. His brother John, now in his 54th year, succeeded him at Sutton. The same reason which stood in the way of illustrating the position which the elder brother held outside Sutton, also applies to any detailed account of the previous career of the younger one; suffice it to say that though John Riland's first work, published while he was yet at the university, was a strong anti-Calvinistic treatise, yet in 1761, he became, as he afterwards stated while at Sutton, conscious that he had been "a preacher of error, and no preacher of truth," and he sought employment under a leading member of the evangelical party, Henry Venn, of Huddersfield, in whose life may be found ample details of the worth of John Riland, and his excellent wife, daughter of Mr. Hudson, a leading Yorkshire churchman. Mr. Riland, became in 1775, the first incumbent of St. Mary's Church, Birmingham, which he retained for a short time after succeeding to Sutton; Mr. Blick, his brother's curate, continuing to officiate there. But in 1791, a sermon preached by the curate to which the rector objected, led to an acrimonious correspondence, which, with the sermon, was published by the former after his resignation, and a subscription list for nearly 1,400 copies of the pamphlet exhibited the interest which was felt in the dispute. Mr. Blick became Vicar of Tamworth, and died in 1842. John Riland obtain a coadjutor entirely to his liking in his son-in-law, the Rev. Joseph Mendham, and for thirty-two years was the faithful pastor of an extensive parish. He divorced himself in some degree from public work of a secular nature, for he refused to be warden when elected in 1792, and thus forfeited his seat upon the Corporation; but he was in the habit of expressing his opinions freely upon any public question which might arise.

The position of the Corporation had been for a time pre-

carious as far as their popularity went, and in 1788 proceedings had been commenced against them, which in 1792 resulted in an injunction restraining them from cutting down any more timber without orders from the Court of Chancery. It was thus that an opening arose for a proposal to employ the fund in dispute to the establishment of a School of Industry, which was proposed in 1798, and warmly supported by the Rector. But the Corporation found it very difficult to meet the question without reviving the enclosure proposal, and in 1800 it was in agitation to call a meeting of freeholders on the subject, but the resolution to do so was negatived. In 1805 the subject of enclosure being revived, John Riland wrote a letter upon the question, taking the ground that it would injure the cottagers, without whose consent he would never support it; at the same time stating reasons for his opposition, which proved him to have entertained views entirely antagonistic to the reclamation of land. His objection, however, proved fatal to the scheme. It was probably with reference to this attempt that a list of freeholders in Sutton was drawn up by Mr. Richard Fowler, of Erdington, giving the total number as 186, of whom rather more than 50 were non-resident.

In 1808 a scheme was suggested for employing the charity funds in the establishment of schools, and a commencement was made by a Sunday school for boys being added to one which for two years had been in existence for girls.

In August, 1813, John Riland presented on behalf of a committee of the inhabitants renewed proposals for the application of the funds with a view to the termination of the prolonged litigation and the profitable application of the balance in the Court of Chancery, then estimated at £40,000.

In 1816 the relators made proposals for Schools of Industry, &c., and in 1819 the then head master of the Grammar School, Charles Barker, B.C.L., of Trinity College, Oxford, who had succeeded Mr. Webb two years before, being desirous of the separation of the Latin and English schools, made overtures to that effect, which tended in the same direction, viz., the establishment of what were then called national and now public elementary schools. Mr. Riland was indefatigable, both in his public instructions from the pulpit, and his parochial visitations. Many anecdotes were current fifty years ago of his quaint proceedings, and pithy sayings, but at eighty he began to fail, and in 1822 he expired suddenly at his own home. He left a son, the estimable minister of the Magdalen Chapel in Birmingham, and three daughters, one married to his curate, Mr. Mendham, who resided in the house above the Grammar School; but his family became extinct in the next generation. Of the changes which had taken place in the ownership of property at Sutton the principal was the sale of Four Oaks Park, in 1792, by Mr. Bateman, who had purchased it after Dr. Gresley's death, to Mr. Hartopp, who was

created a baronet in 1796. The sum paid for the house and about 100 acres of land, was £12,000.

It is a coincidence worth noting that Mr. Bateman himself was created a baronet in 1806, and his title descended to the late Sir F. E. Scott, of Great Barr, whose widow, the present Lady Bateman Scott, was a daughter of Sir William Hartopp. Another family which now began to exercise influence in the place was that of Webster, of Penns Mill, whose ancestor settled and established a manufactory of wire there in the middle of the 18th century.

I regret that I am unable to give a complete account of the Royal Sutton Coldfield Volunteers, "loyal, firm and free," whose banner hangs above the western arch of the parish church, I know little of them beyond the fact that they were for several years commanded by Mr. S. F. S. Perkins, son-in-law of Warden Duncomb already mentioned, and heir to his Sutton property. He was not, however, the original commander, for at the ceremony of "delivering and consecrating the colours with great splendour," on September 17th, 1797, the officers are stated to have been Captain Sir E. Hartopp, Bart., Lieutenant Perkins, and Ensign Holbeche. It is probable that this corps was disbanded at the peace of Amiens, and reformed on Bonaparte's threat of invasion in 1803. Its muskets were sold for the benefit of the patriotic fund during the Crimean War, and the remaining accoutrements dispersed at the sale of Fox Hill, where Mr. Solomon Smith, the Quarter-master of the corps, resided. In 1811, a camp was formed on Hill Common, near the Manorial farm. It consisted of the 7th Dragoon Guards, a brigade of Artillery, and the Edinburgh and Sussex Regiments of Militia. Mr. George Longbottom Crabtree, of Little Sutton, served in the 5th Dragoon Guards through the campaign in the Peninsula, and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant for his good conduct. His son, Mr. Abraham Crabtree, enlisted in the 3rd Light Dragoons, and after serving with high distinction in the Afghan War, 1842-8, was promoted to the rank of Captain, becoming afterwards Adjutant of the Fife Mounted Volunteers. The heir of Langley, William Jesson Pearson, Lieutenant 14th Light Dragoons, after participating in the victory of Talavera, died in Portugal of fatigue and exposure in 1810. A soldier from Sutton named Coburn, was one of the garrison of Hugomont, whose gallant defence contributed so much to the victory of Waterloo. James Ray, who died at Hill in 1869, aged 97, served in the 23rd Light Horse in the Irish Rebellion, and in Egypt in 1801, and was one of the firing party at the funeral of General Sir Ralph Abercromby.

The government of the town during this period was carried on by the Corporation, with occasional interference on the part of other authorities. The Corporation made grants for public

improvements, as for instance when they in 1792 paved the streets (with cobblestones) at the expense of £350, but the high roads from Watford Gap to Chester-road, and from Canwell to Sutton were placed under trustees, and toll-gates erected at the north end of Sutton, at Ashfurlong, and Collet's Brook; they also decided to whom of the neighbouring masters of hounds the privilege of drawing the park coverts should be conceded, on one occasion refusing the application of the Earl of Donegal, of Fisherwick Park, by one vote, (though this decision must have been modified, inasmuch as part of the park is still called Lord Donegal's Ride) and in 1798 giving equal leave to Lord Vernon and Mr. Adderley to hunt the woods; and they exercised the magisterial functions with which the Charter of Charles II had entrusted them, although the county justices occasionally intervened. For instance, when in 1818, the barbarous murder of Mary Ashford took place near Penns, the accused person was taken before Mr. Bedford of Birches Green, instead of before the Warden of Sutton. This case, simple in itself, the undoubted perpetrator of an outrage on an imprudent and unprotected girl being accused of wilful murder, and acquitted on a question of time, became a historical one, from the proceedings which were instituted by the relatives of the victim, with a view of bringing her betrayer to a second trial, and his traversing their "appeal of murder," by claiming under the same statute his "wager of battle." The grave of the unhappy woman is in Sutton Church-yard.

But the principal function of the Corporation, before enclosure and education became the order of the day, was the arrangement of the lot acres, as they were called. A portion of the waste being selected, was divided into lots of an acre each, and every householder had the privilege of drawing a prize or blank in the lottery. It often happened that portions of the allotted area were not worth cultivation, and under the circumstances few cared to cultivate a single acre, so either let their allotment to someone else, or took an adjacent piece, or for a consideration swapped with some less favoured lot holder; so that while the best part of the waste was constantly under cultivation, and to some extent improved and rendered productive, it was interspersed with patches of cold undrained land, full of water, where with the gravelly till or pock stone was entirely unpenetrated. Much jealousy was excited in the appropriation of the lots, and neither planting nor draining on any considerable scale was possible. The Corporation were in litigation with various inhabitants from 1727 to 1788, and again from 1788 to 1802, from which time till 1822, a fund, amounting in round numbers to £40,000, had been suffered to accumulate.

The Corporation also elected their Steward—this honorary office, on the death of Lord Weymouth (Mr. Thynne) in 1714,

was conferred on Thomas Willoughby, the first Lord Middleton; four of whose successors in the title held it, one after another, until 1781, when another Thomas Thynne, of Drayton, third Viscount Weymouth, was elected; he was created Marquess of Bath in 1789, and died in 1796, when Heneage, 4th Earl of Aylesford, succeeded him as Steward of Sutton, and on his death in 1812, Henry, Lord Middleton. The roll may as well be completed by saying that in 1835, on Lord Middleton's death, the 5th Earl of Aylesford was chosen, and to him, in 1859, succeeded Lord Leigh, the last High Steward.

CHAPTER VII

The Enclosure effected—The parish divided—The Education Scheme carried out—Sutton left out of the Municipal Corporation Act

THE death of John Riland had one immediate result affecting the history of Sutton; with him expired the serious opposition to an inclosure. His successor in the Rectory was son of the Mr. Bedford, who had married a daughter of Richard Bisse Riland, and had been his father-in-law's adviser in the original scheme for enclosing the waste. Mr. Homer, the deputy-steward at the date of the Corporation opposition in 1778, had brought his sleepy tenure of office to an end—the most prominent incident in it being that certain parchments and other archives of the Corporation were lost by the corrosion of droppings of port wine, from bottles which he kept for his own refreshment in the same coffer with those ancient documents, and the successors of his son, William Homer, Messrs. Croxall and Holbeche, were men of the time, who held the modern views of political economy, while the representative of the opponents of the Corporation, Mr. Sadler, had several years before this advocated an enclosure. Thus all interests combined in favour of an enclosure act, and although the squatters on the waste, and a few old-fashioned residents still held out, their opposition was by no means formidable. In 1824, a bill was brought in for enclosing lands within the Royal town, manor, and lordship of Sutton Coldfield, and it is curious to note the names of those persons who were then the principal land-owners in the parish. Besides the Warden and Society and the Rector, Sir E. C. Hartopp, Bart., Sir Robert Peel, Bart. (who had purchased the Langley estate from the representatives of the Jesson family), F. B. Hacket, Esq. (Moor Hall), W. H. G. Floyer, Esq. (of Hints, who owned land at New Shipton), C. Chadwick, Esq. (New Hall), John Scott, Esq.* and the Rev. James Scott (who owned land at Maney), John Whitehead, Esq., and William Bedford, Esq., as patron of

* The daughter and heir of John Scott, Miss Mary Scott, married in 1830 Robert Wellbeloved, Esq., barrister-at-law, son of the Rev. Charles Wellbeloved, Unitarian Minister, of York. It was against this clergyman that the decree in the "Lady Hewley Trusts" case was issued.—See "Gentleman's Magazine," December, 1833.

the rectory and owner of Maney House, are the names mentioned. In addition to the usual provisions for the allotment of lands reclaimed, fencing, draining, road making, stone, gravel, and marlpits, the Corporation received an allotment as lords of the manor, and the Rector another in lieu of great and small tithes in the open fields and commons, while the tithe of the old enclosures was commuted for a corn rent: from this arrangement the Park alone was exempted, and remained subject to a tithe for cattle until 1851, when a nominal sum was accepted by the Rector in satisfaction of his right. Of course, many points of detail arose which led to controversy, and in some respects modification of the original proposals, but in the main they were adopted without any serious alteration in 1825.

That the material prosperity of the place was much augmented by this measure may be seen by the fact that while the increase in population between 1801 and 1811 was only 112, from 1811 to 1821, 491, and from 1821 to 1831, only 234, the next decade showed an increase of 596, the population being in 1841, 4,280, and the number of houses 882. As the extent of land allotted and enclosed exceeded 3,500 acres, it will easily be seen how much additional employment was created, and how large a portion of private capital, estimated by the best authorities at £35 an acre, was required to be expended in rendering the soil fit for cultivation. One of the great conveniences of the Act was also the facility it afforded for exchanges of land, and a substantial boon was secured for the town by the desire of Sir Edmund Hartopp to enlarge his grounds by taking from the Park a very picturesque piece of forest, of 63 acres in extent, known as Ladywood. To accomplish this, he purchased 93 acres of meadows on the side of the Park adjacent to the town, to which at that time the Park approached no nearer than the house then called Brown's Forge, now occupied by Mrs. Wiggan, and threw them into the open ground, making at the same time a driving road from Mill-street, 317 yards long and 30 feet wide, instead of the circuitous course over Manor Hill and Windley Pool dam, up to that time the only road for horses. Yet this improvement was the cause of the only serious outbreak of dissatisfaction which made itself felt, though undoubtedly the enclosure was considered a grievance by a certain section of the parishioners. Sir Edmund Hartopp printed, on April 5th, 1826, a handbill for the purpose of correcting some "misapprehensions which are understood to have entered the minds of some of the inhabitants of this parish with regard to the nature of the exchange which is meditated between the Corporation and myself;" and he states in another paper that he had felt obliged to do this in consequence of an attempt to set Ladywood on fire, on the Sunday morning previous, in several places at once, thus showing that the act was one of conspiracy. No great damage resulted, owing to a sudden

shower of rain; and this remains, happily, an isolated instance of outrage in the parish.

The formation of roads and the planting of trees on the waste were actively promoted by the Rector, Mr. Bedford, who possessed great practical knowledge, especially upon the latter of these subjects, on which he had written a short treatise. He induced many of his neighbours to follow his example in forming plantations, and thus the newly re-claimed districts soon assumed an appearance of beauty equal to the patches of old cultivation which lay near them.

In the same year, 1825, a revolution of quite as great importance was created by the approbation of the Court of Chancery to a scheme for the appropriation of the funds of the Corporation to educational and charitable purposes. It provided for the establishment of a Charity School in the town of Sutton Coldfield, for the moral and religious instruction of one hundred of the male and female children of the poor inhabitants of the parish, of a similar school for Hill and Little Sutton, and a preparatory school for the instruction of forty children at Walmley, the distance being considered too great for them to attend the other schools. It was further ordered that a part of the above school in the town of Sutton, should be appropriated for a school of industry for the instruction of young girls in sewing, spinning, knitting, writing and arithmetic; the children to be employed in making their own clothes, also for the boys in the charity schools, and also to knit stockings for the boys, and to make up linen to be lent or given to poor married women in child-bed as after mentioned. That the children attending these schools should be annually clothed as a means of inducing the parents to send their children to school regularly. That the sum of £2,392 should be allowed for the building and furnishing these schools, including the school of industry, the Corporation being allowed to use what timber might be wanted for the purpose, out of that growing in Sutton Park. That the sum of £40 should be allowed as a salary for the master of the school at Sutton; the sum of £60 for the mistress of the school of industry, she finding an assistant and having the instruction and management of the girls' school: also, that the sum of £40 should be allowed for the master at Hill, and £25 for the master or mistress at Walmley. Subsequently, in 1828, £30 was allowed for the stipend of a mistress at Hill. £20 per annum was allowed for firing at the different schools. The sum of £2 was allowed for the clothing of each boy, and the sum of £1 11s. 6d. for each girl, which would make the clothing for the full number of 240 amount to £429; and that none should be admitted under the age of six, nor continue at school beyond the age of twelve. £29 was allowed annually for apprenticing or putting out to service with new clothes the scholars who were leaving the school. £100 was

allowed for the purchase of raw materials and machinery for the school of industry, and £50 annually for materials for making clothing. In the rules and regulations established by the Corporation the principal feature was that absence from school was to be punished by a fine of a penny for half or twopence a whole day, and an absence of fifty days disqualified entirely for clothing. The increase of inhabitants also soon led to a rule that the benefits of the foundation should be restricted to residents of eight years' standing. By and by salaries had to be augmented, and the requirements of Acts of Parliament for the extension of Education complied with, so that in 1876 the total sum expended on the schools annually was more than £1,700. By the scheme a sum of 30 guineas per annum was allowed for free vaccination, medical attendance at the schools, and at the houses of poor married women in childbirth; a further sum of £35 being allowed for linen to be lent. £30 was also allowed for the purchase of "blankets or other articles of charity to be distributed annually on the day of the Warden's choice, amongst the old and infirm poor persons of the best character in the parish." Ten almshouses were built at a cost of £608 for the reception of the "reduced and meritorious inhabitants," and two houses to cost £258, for park-keepers, who were also sergeants at mace, with a salary of £50 each. For a weighing machine "for the use and benefit of the poor inhabitants," £173 14s. was allowed, and an annual salary of £5 to a person who should attend to it. £10 was allowed for purchasing new maces, and for restoring the ancient forms of the Corporation, such as cloaks and hats to the sergeants, and a coat and hat to the keeper; and that there should be an allowance for the dinner at the Warden's choice to the members of the Corporation, who give their time and labour gratuitously, the annual sum of £25.

In 1827 the road to Birmingham along the Dam was raised, and a stone bridge erected across the brook. At this time twenty-four coaches passed through Sutton daily. In 1828 two galleries were erected in the Parish Church for the school children at a cost of £300. In 1831 the population of the parish was enumerated as 3,684.

In 1832 the churchyard required extension, for which purpose the old stone building in the Blindlane, which had been until 1728 the Grammar School, was pulled down. At the same time a vestry was constructed under the tower of the church in lieu of one in the south-east corner of the building. In 1834 a new wing was added by Mr. Bedford to the rectory house. The increase of population consequent upon the reclamation of waste land now began to require church extension, and in 1834 the northern part of the parish was provided with a chapel of ease, dedicated to St. James, and consecrated in December, 1835, by Bishop Ryder, of Lichfield and Coventry. A house was soon after

added, of which the principal part of the cost was defrayed by the rector. The Rev. S. C. Saxton, M.A., was licensed to the incumbency, the Rev. Joseph Mendham, who had officiated for a short time after the erection of the church, having declined the post. To this church a district was attached in 1853.

In 1833 an inquiry was held by Mr. Cockburn (afterwards Sir Alexander Cockburn, Chief Justice), into the affairs of the Corporation, with a view to the parish being included in the Municipal Corporation Act then about to be introduced. Mr. Cockburn's report was much objected to by the Corporation as full of mis-statements, &c., and a list of the then members of the Corporation was published with a view of showing that twenty-five more efficient persons could not be found in the parish. The list is as follows:—Warden: Mr. Browne, saw and spade manufacturer; Mr. Oughton, gun barrel manufacturer; Sir E. C. Hartopp, Bart., county magistrate and deputy-lieutenant; Mr. Nicholson, carpenter; Mr. Wakefield, gentleman; Mr. Cooper, farmer; F. B. Hacket, Esq., county magistrate and deputy-lieutenant; Mr. Hughes, woolstapler; Mr. Sol. Smith, builder; Mr. R. Browne, glazier; Mr. W. Smith, gentleman; Mr. Jenkins, farmer; Rev. W. R. Bedford, rector and county magistrate; Mr. Grew, gentleman; Mr. Brockas, tailor; Rev. J. Packwood, curate; Mr. Rochford, yeoman; Mr. W. Perkins, attorney at law; Rev. H. Holden, M.A.; Mr. Kempson, tanner; Mr. Horton, surgeon; Jos. Webster, Esq., wire manufacturer and county magistrate; W. Hartopp, Esq., M.A., Trinity College, Cambridge; Mr. C. Barker, M.A., Trinity College, Oxford; Mr. Jos. Webster, B.A., Trinity College, Oxford.

Sutton Coldfield was finally excluded from the Act, although 300 inhabitants are stated to have signed a petition approving of the operation of the bill if the boundaries of the parish and the privileges enjoyed by its inhabitants could be preserved.

In 1836 a middle-class school for boys was established, for which a schoolroom was erected on the Church-hill, while the old workhouse (now the Municipal Buildings), which had become useless in consequence of Sutton being added to the Aston Union by the Poor Law Act of 1835, was converted into a residence for the master. This school was abandoned in 1853. In 1834 the old meeting house at Sutton, which had been closed for some time, was pulled down, and a Roman Catholic Chapel erected on its site. In 1838 the present college at Oscott, then known as Gibbet-hill, was erected, and the pupils from old Oscott College—(Maryvale)—transferred to it.

In 1838 the Coronation of Queen Victoria was celebrated at Sutton with all the loyalty of the ancient and royal town. Among the other features of the celebration one of the principal ones was that tables were set down Coleshill Street, from the old Town Hall (the weighing machine) to the church, at which the

poor of the parish were feasted. A goodly company of ladies and gentlemen mounted one of the tables to sing "God save the Queen," when unhappily down came the table, but no serious harm was sustained. At the general election in 1832, when the candidates were Mr. Dugdale (father of the Recorder of Birmingham), Sir Eardley Wilmot, and Mr. Hemming, Sutton gave Dugdale sixty-six votes; Wilmot, 67; and Hemming, six. In 1835, when Mr. Gregory opposed Dugdale and Wilmot, he obtained forty votes to Dugdale's 157, and Wilmot's 128. On the first occasion seventy-eight persons voted; on the second, one hundred and ninety. These had to record their votes at Coleshill. Sutton became a polling place in 1837.

In 1840 a new elementary school for boys was erected at the Green-lanes, near Chester-road, and divine service on Sunday evenings commenced there by the Rector. In the same year the affairs of the Grammar School occupied the attention of the House of Commons. Much dissatisfaction existing as to the teaching and management of the school, Sir J. E. Eardley Wilmot, one of the members for North Warwickshire, moved for a return and obtained the following report: "The master has no list of the number of scholars, and cannot ascertain with accuracy how many attended in each year during a period of more than twenty-two years. He believes that up to 1829 there were usually three or four foundation scholars attending the Grammar School, and that since that time there have usually been five or six. The number attending the school on the 1st June, 1840, was seven." The master in question, Mr. Charles Barker, died in 1842, and Sir Eardley Wilmot went out to Tasmania, as Governor, in the month of March following, having received a gold snuff box with the following inscription:—"Presented by the inhabitants of the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield to Sir John E. Eardley Wilmot, Bart., in testimony of their gratitude for the good services he has rendered to that place.—March, 1843." The matter was taken up by Mr. C. B. Adderley, member for North Staffordshire (the present Lord Norton), under whose auspices considerable improvements were effected in the regulations of the school, and finally confirmed by the Court of Chancery in 1843, Mr. James Eccleston, B.A., of Dublin University, being elected master. In July, 1843, the Rev. W. R. Bedford died, having held the Rectory for twenty-one years, and seen great improvements take place in the town and neighbourhood. He was succeeded by the Rev. Richard Williamson, D.D., head master of Westminster School, another grandson of Richard Bisse Riland.

Shortly before Mr. Bedford's death his relative, Miss Lucy Riland, daughter of the Rev. John Riland, rector, proposed to contribute £1,000 towards the endowment of a church at Walmley. Subscriptions and a bazaar in Sutton Park raised

£4,000 in addition. Mr. Bedford wished the church to have been built upon the Birmingham road, but eventually the views of Miss Riland, supported by Mr. Joseph Webster, of Penns Mill, prevailed, and the church was commenced on the present site. During its progress Divine service was performed in the Walmley Girls' School. The Corporation gave the land for the site of the church and parsonage, and paid for sittings for school children. It was consecrated in 1845 by the title St. John's Church, being stated to contain 450 sittings—257 free—besides 96 for school children. A district was assigned in 1846; a parsonage having been built in 1843; the Rev. G. W. Robinson, M.A., St. Peter's College, Cambridge, was the first vicar.

CHAPTER VIII

Sutton before Railways—Intellectual and social conditions of the town—Bond for making a line—Corporation inquiry—
Railway line made

THE period between 1841 and 1861 was not one of much numerical increase in the town and manor of Sutton. In 1841 the number of inhabitants was 4,280; in 1851, 4,574; and in 1861, 4,662. During the last decade the removal of Penn's Mill had caused a decline of 100 souls in the parish of Walmley; and the parish of Hill was as regards building, stationary. But it is not to be supposed that it was a period of stagnation; on the other hand many public improvements were originated, and the town fully maintained its consequence in the intellectual and political life of the country at large. In a literary point of view Mr. Eccleston, head master of the school, takes rank as an author by his book on English Antiquities, published in 1847, and he introduced several inmates in his house of some distinction, one of them being the late Mr. Bellew, known as a preacher and elocutionist, who, while still resident under his tutor's roof, though a student at Oxford, published a drama entitled "Speke Hall." Mr. Eccleston, in consequence of some derangement of his private affairs, accepted an appointment in Tasmania, and resigned the school in 1849, when Mr. Josiah Wright of Trinity College, Cambridge (1st class classical tripos), was elected in his stead. Mr. Wright, who held the school for fifteen years, was an author of several manuals of classical knowledge and of a little book of more general interest, "David, King of Israel," which obtained, as it deserved, a wide popularity. In the house next above the School then resided a former curate of the parish, the Rev. Joseph Mendham, also a well known and scholarly writer, chiefly on the Protestant controversy; one of his books, the "History of the Council of Trent," being an important work of reference. The Rev. James Packwood, who was curate from 1826 to 1844, and again from 1850 till his death in 1867, also published hymns, poems, and some sermons. The Rector, Richard William-

son, D.D., who had been presented in 1843, on the death of the Rev. W. R. Bedford, was a ripe scholar of much university distinction, 7th Wrangler, 4th in classical tripos, and Fellow of Trinity College, his principal publication being an erudite discussion upon Greek and Roman Costume, written for the object of reforming the mode of dressing the Westminster play, which up to his mastership had been barbarously presented in modern attire. During his tenure of the Rectory of Sutton he was mainly instrumental in founding, upon lines which afterwards developed into the present Institute, a permanent library; and he assisted in many other ways in promoting the well being of the place. He was removed to the Vicarage of Pershore in 1850, where he died much regretted in 1865.

The principal houses of the parish were all in the occupation of families who by their character and standing in society reflected credit upon the neighbourhood. Sir Edmund Hartopp, second baronet, married a sister of Lord Henley, a lady whose artistic skill and taste left many traces upon the mansion of Four Oaks, which, modernized from the original building erected by Lord Foliot (only a portion of the outbuildings being allowed to remain unaltered), was a well-proportioned house of Palladian design with an imposing flight of steps to the principal entrance, and a very elegant and spacious hall from which the principal reception rooms opened en suite. Among other historical pictures of interest it contained a portrait of the Cromwellian general, Fleetwood, from whom the first Lady Hartopp traced her ancestry. George H. Fleetwood Hartopp, the eldest son of the first baronet, and M.P., for Dundalk, had arranged a bachelor residence at Doe Bank House, near the gate of his father's park, which after his death was tenanted by General Gosselin and Mrs. Mainwaring in succession to each other; and then for several years was the residence of Mr. William Hartopp, afterwards the third baronet. Mr. Hacket, the descendant of the famous bishop, about 1840 ceased to reside at Moor Hall, to which, as it was in Bishop Vesey's time, a modern front with reception rooms had been added, after which the house was let, first to Mr. Moillett, a Birmingham banker, and then to Mr. Robert Garnett, one of the sons of a great Manchester merchant, and a relative by marriage of Sir Robert Peel, who resided there for twenty-two years. Ashfurlong House, an old farm house with a modern front built on to it by Mr. Vaughton, a gentleman who was High Sheriff of Warwickshire in 1804, also belonged to Mr. Hacket, and was let by him for several years to Mr. Joseph Webster, of Penn's Mill, the representative of a long-established manufacturing family, who from his own cultured conversation, and the connections which he could claim with men of talent like the Darwins, the Lowes, the Strutts, and others nearer home, occupied no mean position as a representative man. The son of this gentleman, Mr.

Baron Webster, resided at Penns, then a pleasant and roomy residence in the cottage style, and was a leading sportsman, an active magistrate, and an efficient officer of yeomanry. Indeed, so popular was he in the country that he was more than once spoken of as a candidate in the liberal interest for North Warwickshire, and addressed the electors of Birmingham in 1857, in opposition to Mr. Bright. He was conspicuous in local Sutton affairs, and a most useful member of all public bodies with which he was connected. He died after a brief illness in 1860, when the greater part of his property passed by sale into the hands of his partner, Mr. James Horsfall.

New Hall was, at the beginning of the time now under description, deserted and much dilapidated. Mr. Charles Chadwick had, at the end of the 18th century, added materially to the ancient moated structure, which consisted chiefly of a large stone hall with an oriel, and a long banqueting room accessible by a staircase, ornamented with heraldic devices, and lighted by bay windows, in the one of which overlooking the moat were the arms of the Devereux family in stained glass. This room in 1840 was used as apple store, and was so decayed as to be dangerous as to its floor. Mr. C. Chadwick had erected flanking towers of red brick with stone quoins and mullions, with carved escutcheons of arms below the windows, which as the tints mellowed by age were not ineffective from a pictorial point of view. He also adorned several windows with pieces of painted glass brought from Flanders, representing legendary subjects, two of which were engraved for the "Gentleman's Magazine," in August, 1798; and he formed also a collection of books and pictures of some value. About 1840, the house, which had been only in the occupation of a farmer for some time, was let to a Birmingham merchant of the name of Jacot, and about ten years later the owner, Mr. Hugo Mavesyn Chadwick, removed his residence from Ridware to New Hall, which he thoroughly repaired, especially restoring the armorial cornice in the banqueting room, in which were displayed the crests of the Sacheverell, Cawarden and Chadwick families. Mr. Chadwick was a man of considerable originality and taste, and had been a traveller in parts of the world more remote than those which were then usually visited by roving Englishmen. He died in 1854, when he was succeeded by his son, now living, who served with credit as an officer in the army during the Indian mutiny.

Among the smaller houses which were occupied by gentry at that time, the New or Red House as it was then called, now Holly Field, was a lodge erected for hunting purposes, which had been much enlarged by Mr. William Smith, one of a well-established family of prosperous agriculturists in the neighbourhood of Middleton, whose only son, Mr. John Smith, was called to the Bar, and after an unsuccessful attempt to enter Parliament

at Salisbury, in 1847, settled down in the south of England as a country gentleman, and died in 1888 at his seat in Oxfordshire. Holly Field had passed some years before this into the hands of Mr. Henry Addenbrooke, who had become the partner of Mr. Vincent Holbeche, and deputy-steward of the corporation. At Falcon Lodge resided Mr. Pepper, who claimed at the time of his death, in 1862, to be the oldest surviving volunteer officer in Britain, having served in the Nottingham fencibles on their first embodiment at the end of the last century.

Foxhill was known to the older people as Fiddler's Hall, having been built by a Mr. Valentine, brother to the composer of an air, known as "All round my hat," which, in its day, enjoyed a popularity equal to any of the street tunes with which everyone is familiar. He endeavoured to introduce the manufacture of pottery, for which he erected furnaces, still or lately standing near the house. After the failure of this scheme the house came into the possession of Mr. Solomon Smith, whose architectural taste and business knowledge had guided the Corporation in their designs for schools and other public works. At Little Sutton stood a fairly spacious house adjacent to which Mr. Kempson (an old family name in Warwickshire) carried on the business of a tanner. Returning to the southern side of Sutton Town, the house called Holland better deserved its name than at the present day, as its ponds and canals came quite up to the windows of the building, now much enlarged and modernised, and the water-power was utilised for driving a mill to grind gun-barrels. This was the residence and property of Mr. Oughton, the representative of a Warwickshire family, one of whose members had been High Sheriff for the County in 1792, and of whom General Sir Adolphus Oughton, K.B., who died in 1780, was also a relative. About a mile farther on the road to Birmingham a house of some size and pretension, had been erected at Wild Green, then literally a "wild" and unsheltered spot, which, in the days of window tax, the original builder had equipped from motives of economy with casements of sufficient size to light two rooms at once, and with other strange but substantial divergencies from ordinary constructions. This was occupied by the Revd. Hyla Holden, a clergyman of good local connections, one of whose sons, Dr. Holden, of Ipswich School, attained considerable distinction at Cambridge, being Junior Opt., and Senior Classic, and a Fellow of Trinity College; and is well known as an author of standard classical works. At the Drif-fold House, where for some time Messrs. Terry and Horton, surgeons, had a licensed private asylum, the same business was carried on by Dr. George Bodington, a gentleman whose best claim to celebrity arises from his "Essay on the treatment and cure of pulmonary consumption," published in 1840, in which he was the first to recommend dry frosty air as a cure. In those

days he was better known as a frequent speaker at Protectionist gatherings, (on one occasion, in 1849, addressing a large meeting in the metropolis), and in 1859 he offered himself to the electors of Birmingham in an address, which, as the "Birmingham Journal" observed, had, at all events, the merit of explicitness. "The political creed of the new candidate is rather peculiar, we shall not say incoherent. Household suffrage and no Free Trade; exclusive dealing in free cotton and the restoration of the Navigation Laws; the maintenance of our Constitution unimpaired, and repeal of the Union with Ireland." These ideas did not commend themselves to any body of electors, but Dr. Bodington, though he never entered Parliament, was an indefatigable local politician, and a valued member of society at Sutton until his death. He left a large family, of whom probably the best known is the Revd. Canon Charles Bodington, of Lichfield. In the White Cottage in the Park, which had been also a water-mill for the manufacture of spades, under George Browne the last survivor of the Sutton Volunteers, resided for some years the Revd. Carter Smith, brother-in-law and curate to Dr. Williamson, a clergyman of more than average merit, whose eldest son was afterwards Librarian of the Middle Temple. In the town of Sutton itself were several houses inhabited by well-known persons. The last surviving daughter of the "Old Rector," John Riland, had built herself a house near the church, now called Coleshill Lodge, and a little higher up, the house which is supposed to have been the first Rectory was in the occupation of the Holbeche family—who held the office of Deputy Steward, first as partners with Mr. Edward Croxall, and then as the firm of Holbeche and Willoughby and Holbeche and Addenbrooke. Mr. Willoughby (a relative of Lord Middleton) resided at the house now the Swan Hotel, which had been formerly in the occupation of Mr. Croxall, and then of Mrs. Peake, widow of a former vicar of Aston. Mr. Thomas Holbeche, whose ancestors had been landed proprietors in North Warwickshire for several centuries, after retiring from active practice, was appointed a County Magistrate, and elected the first chairman of the Aston Union upon its formation. The street opposite to this house remained paved with cobble stones, as portions of the footpath are now, until 1854. A little higher up on the same side stood a substantial brick house, now pulled down, with a pleasant garden and good stabling attached, where resided Mr. Horton, whose connection with the medical profession has already been adverted to,* and a little higher still another good house of the Queen Anne period was the abode of Mr. Sadler, solicitor, of whose connection with the public work of the town mention has already been made.

* At Mr. Horton's house was a collection of stuffed birds which had been shot by himself and Swift, the Park-keeper in Sutton Park. It was a most remarkable and valuable assemblage of curious specimens, but was unfortunately allowed to fall into a state of neglect, and was eventually dispersed after his death.

This gentleman (whose ancestors resided at Castle Bromwich and Whitacre, and claimed kindred with the illustrious statesman of the Tudor period, Sir Ralph Sadler), died in 1855, leaving two sons, now living at Sutton. Higher up still the old Moat House was in the possession of Mr. S. F. S. Perkins, the representative of the old Warden Duncumb of 1780, for the accommodation of whose hounds the roomy outbuildings were originally constructed.†

Mr. Perkins, who was a barrister-at-law,§ and for many years commandant of the Sutton Volunteer Corps, died in 1852, leaving two sons—the Rev. D. S. Perkins, who resided at his family property of Orton-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, and William, who was for many years clerk to the county magistrates of the Aston Division—and a daughter, who married Mr. S. P. Wolferstan, of Statfold. This lady was the author of several little poetical pieces, of which the most important was entitled “Flora and Pamona’s Fête,” on the model of the “Butterfly’s Ball.” A grandson, Col. George Perkins, has recently completed his command of the second regiment of Warwickshire Militia. Opposite to Mr. Perkins’ residence, at the Rookery, a house built by Mr. John Riland, the nonjuring son of the first Rector, resided the two daughters of Mr. Webb, formerly master of the school, whose son attained the position of Master of Clare Hall, Cambridge. One of these ladies took a leading share in the charitable and educational work of the town, and was much assisted by another lady (who resided at the rough-cast gabled house popularly called the town house of Bishop Vesey, certainly the residence of the Lawleys of Canwell), Miss Bracken, to whose talent and industry we owe the work entitled “The History of the Forest and Chase of Sutton Coldfield.” Above the Rookery there stands another old brick house, somewhat enlarged since that day, which belonged to a family named Greatrex, one of whose members having been of seafaring antecedents, named it the Anchorage.

A small brick place of worship with a house adjoining, on the high road at Maney, was erected in 1846, by the Revd. James Bourne, whose autobiography published in 1861, contains some curious observations on the religious condition of Sutton in 1844.

There were many old houses and old families among the yeomen, freeholders, cottagers, and labourers of the parish, not only connected with names like Smith or Wilkins, but with those of Norman origin, such as Beresford, Mountfort, Rochford,

† On one occasion a valuable hunter of Mr. Duncumb’s was missing from its stable, search was made and rewards offered in vain, until it was discovered quietly feeding in the hay loft above, having walked up a flight of brick steps which inclination or fear prevented it from retraversing. Some difficulty was experienced in lowering the animal to “terra firma.”

§ An eloquent eulogium upon the eminent statesman, William Pitt, delivered by Mr. Perkins at a meeting in Birmingham, is reported in the “Gentleman’s Magazine,” vol. 87, part 1, page 621.

Basset, or of evident local significance, Twalmley, Whitacre, Rushton, Parker, Bayliss, Ashford, Sylvester, Aulton, and the like. Many of these had occupied the same dwellings, and cultivated the same crofts for generations, but the repeal of the Corn Laws of 1845 began a downward progress, which has much diminished their numbers. It must be noted also that the large number of well-to-do residents, who were constantly importing servants, many of whom married and settled in the parish, kept up a fluctuating element in the population; for strangers thus constantly came from the remotest parts of the three kingdoms, and even in the last century, from other quarters of the globe.†

The agricultural population were by no means badly off during this decade, as much work still remained to be done to the land reclaimed by the enclosure; but the absence of railroad communication, or of water-carriage, and the improvement in machinery, caused the removal of most of the water-mills and the closing of the small forges which they had been the means of supporting. At the time of the opening of the Grand Junction Railway from Birmingham to Liverpool, a branch to Derby was proposed, to take the route of the valley to the east of Sutton, and about 1845 the London and North Western Railway Co. contemplated a line in the same direction to Lichfield with a station near Sutton Park. Requiring the consent of the Corporation to certain provisions in their Act, they were induced, at the suggestion of Mr. Baron Webster to enter into a bond to make a line avoiding the Park, under a penalty of £20,000. The Company, in the sequel, abandoned their line, and the Corporation claimed the penalty. The railway authorities urged that the bond did not compel them to make a line, but if made, to confine it within certain limits, and denied any liability. In the end an award of £3,000 was accepted by the Corporation, to be spent in some public purpose, which was ultimately agreed to be a new Town Hall, the old one being pronounced to be in bad repair. Shortly after this the Midland Railway offered a scheme for a railway to the Park, which went no farther than a suggestion, a petition from 400 inhabitants being presented against it, and a committee of landowners was formed with a view to promote a line in the direction most likely to accommodate the neighbourhood. A gentleman named Hurry was appointed engineer, and surveyed the country on both sides of the turnpike road, but before his report appeared the Midland Railway presented an alternative plan, which starting from Saltley and coming as near to the eastern side of the road as the gradients permitted, was to terminate in the valley near the Skinners Pool. This line was at

† Baptized November 27th, 1765, a native of Jamaica, being a person of riper years, now in the service of Simon Luttrell, Esq., named Philip, to which afterwards was added the surname of Sutton.

1789.—There was baptized the 23rd day of November, Bartholomew, a negro, and servant to Mr. Goward, of this town, aged 30 years. Register.

once adopted by a strong party among the promoters, led by Mr. Baron Webster, while others adhered to the plan of Mr. Hurry, starting from the London and North Western at Aston and terminating at the Reddicroft. These rival lines, known as the Eastern and Western lines respectively, divided the public opinion of the district for many months, and after a week's investigation, a committee of the House of Commons decided in favour of the Western line, which had by this time been adopted by the North Western as a branch of their system. The line was at once commenced and was completed in 1860. Up to this date communication with Birmingham (and more rarely with Lichfield) was carried on by means of omnibuses drawn by two, three, or four horses, which took the average time of eighty minutes for the journey from Sutton to Birmingham. It was natural that during the existence of this mode of intercommunication that part of the parish which lay nearest to the Birmingham road should develop most rapidly; and this led first, to the formation of an ecclesiastical district, and then to the foundation of a Church and parish to which the name of Boldmere was given, from the situation of the Church on the eminence above "Baldmoor Lake," upon the Chester Road. In 1840 a boys' school was erected at the Green Lanes, and divine service established there on Sunday afternoons. In 1848 a school for girls and infants was erected near the spot which was afterwards selected for the Church on the Coldfield, and a morning service added to the one in the other building. In 1856 the first stone of a new Church was laid and the parsonage house commenced, and in 1857 the Church was consecrated, the Rev. E. H. Kittoe being the first incumbent. As originally constructed the Church held 350 sittings, as now enlarged by the addition of an aisle 150 more are added, arches having been constructed in the original walls to render this extension easy. The first cost was £2,663, the addition in 1871, £1,320—raised by private subscriptions. Mention has already been made of the demolition of the old Town Hall. This structure which stood at the point of junction of the three streets of old Sutton, consisted of an upper storey, with a large room below, and a piazza or porch, where a market on a small scale could be held. The first proposition was to rebuild it on the same site, but as this was considered too cramped, after designs from architects had been obtained, and that of Mr. Geo. Bidlake, of Wolverhampton, selected, a new site had to be procured. Unfortunately the opportunity of obtaining the buildings immediately opposite, on the east side of Coleshill Street, was lost, and ultimately the present site, of which the chief recommendation was that it belonged to the Corporation was selected, and the hall was completed in 1859, at a cost of £4,500, of which £2,500 came from the fine paid by the Railway.

In 1855 an attempt was made to bring the Government of

the Manor under the Municipal Corporations Act. The dissatisfaction originated with some regulations for sporting and other amenities of the Park, which caused certain opponents to form themselves into a "Park Protection Society," meeting at the Green Man Inn, Erdington. In the course of the summer several public meetings were held, and signatures professing to represent the majority of the inhabitants, were obtained to petitions for a municipal charter, and in August, 1855, an enquiry was held before Major Warburton, sent down as Government Commissioner. The petitioners had the assistance of Mr. J. M. Clabon, of Great George Street, a very well-known Parliamentary lawyer, while the Corporation engaged the services of Mr. Huddleston, an eminent barrister, afterwards a judge. Unfortunately the enquiry, though prolonged over twelve days, was in a great measure confined to the genuine character of the petition, which was seriously impugned. Little therefore is to be elicited from the printed report issued in April, 1856, which throws light upon the management of the trust, or the improvements suggested by the petitioners, except that they brought evidence in favour of cultivating Sutton Park!

An attempt was made to obtain a hearing for the party in favour of moderate reform, whose views may be surmised from a letter addressed to the Rector, who was warden that year, by an influential ratepayer, inquiring "whether the mode of electing new members in the Corporation could be transferred to the inhabitants, and confirmed by an order from the Chartist Commissioners, I do not know, but perhaps by inquiry you might be able to ascertain, as I think perhaps that would produce the improvements required." These views were brought to the notice of the Commissioner, but he decided that his duty was simply to examine and report upon the petition already presented, and that he had no power to recommend such an alternative as was suggested, so that the proposal never came to light. The commissioner reported that the promoters of a Municipal Charter had not made out their case.

One of the matters brought forward at this inquiry was the abandonment of the "middle school," a school for boys of a grade superior to the elementary teaching. This school had been set up in 1837, in a building erected for the purpose on the Church Hill, to which twelve free scholars were elected, for whose education the master was paid £48 by the Corporation, while any others could attend at a payment of ten shillings a quarter. In 1848 this arrangement was altered into a general payment of five shillings a quarter, and in 1852 the Corporation decided to abandon the school, the master of the Grammar School being willing to take twelve free pupils elected by the Corporation for the sum of £48. Under Mr. Wright's mastership the Grammar School increased its numbers so much that, in

1859, the master found it necessary to ask the Trustees to raise £1,000 to be expended in new buildings. In addition to schools on the Coldfield already mentioned, the Corporation in 1851 removed the Walmley Girls' School to a new site near the Church, and enlarged it for an infants' department. Infants' schools were established at Hill by the Rector, and likewise a dame's school on Whitehouse Common. In 1854 the Rev. Nash Stephenson, the founder of the Coventry Church Extension Education Scheme, inspected the Corporation schools upon the invitation of the warden, and although his report was repudiated by the majority of the Corporation of that day, yet his suggestions for retirement, inspection, and other improvements, were shortly afterwards adopted in the main.

CHAPTER IX

Difficulties arising from the increase of population—Growth of the feeling in favour of a Municipal Corporation—Extinction of old Corporation in 1883. Municipal Charter granted

THE opening of the railway communication with Birmingham was, as might have been expected, the commencement of an era of much increase in the prosperity and population of Sutton Coldfield. The population from 4,662 in 1861, had increased at the next census to 5,938, and in 1881 to 7,737. But with the population came problems which the place was hardly ripe to encounter, and the difficulty of meeting the changed condition was much enhanced by the death of Mr. B. D. Webster, on whose ability and knowledge of the world the government of the town had materially depended. One of the first matters which cropped up after the opening of the railway was the diversion of the footpaths which existed on the western side of the town. One of these entered the fields on the western side of the High-street just opposite the Tamworth-lane, where the toll bar stood, and passing the back of the Anchorage and Rookery gardens, emerged again at the foot of Mill Street, having crossed at right angles another foot road which ran by the side of the Three Tuns to Clifton Hill, and thence to the Park Gate. This latter path had to be diverted in consequence of the erection, on Clifton Hill, of a Railway Hotel; and a road running round the hotel by the station was substituted for it. A more serious matter which arose at the same time was the difficulty of keeping order in Sutton Park among the largely increased number of visitors who were conveyed by railway. Up to this time (1862) the only friction which had been experienced had been from squabbles about game, which had led to the appointment of a keeper in 1854, but now the complaints of indecent behaviour and depredation by the visitors made it necessary that the residents should be protected, and an arrangement was entered into with the Chief Constable of Warwickshire for police supervision, to

provide for which and to lessen the number of disorderly immigrants, a charge for admission was made by authority of the Corporation, not, however, without some attempted resistance on the part of a section of the inhabitants. These changes were materially put into train by the tact and courtesy of Mr. Charles Cooper, who had been appointed surveyor to the Corporation in 1850, under whose careful management the property of the Corporation was much advanced in value. It was also fortunate that Ashfurlong House had been purchased by Mr. Thomas Colmore, a gentleman of legal training and ability in public matters, who as a magistrate, warden (in 1864-5-6), and Chairman of the Aston Board of Guardians, exercised great influence for good in the district. Mr. Colmore's death in 1870 deprived the public of his guidance just when it would have been most valuable.

For even in the early years of this decade the increase of building was bringing with it the sewage difficulty, and the want of a local authority to deal with the subject soon made itself felt. In the then existing Public Health (Nuisances Removal) Act a Council for the purposes of the Act was defined as a body presided over by a Mayor, "Warden," or other officer, the word Warden having been, it was believed, introduced at the suggestion of Mr. Baron Webster, expressly to meet the case of Sutton Coldfield. Beyond the presentment of nuisances occasionally made by the Court leet, the Act was a dead letter at Sutton, and as nearly every house had sufficient land attached to it to absorb the legitimate overflow of malodorous matter, while the streets were kept clean by volunteer scavengers, there was small cause for complaint. In 1866 the lessee of the meadows between the Park-road and the brook refused to permit the influx of sewage from the recently erected houses in the Station-road, then known as Hacket-street, and stopped an open ditch down which the overflow from the town generally had found its way into the brook. This matter was settled by private arrangement, contributions being obtained from the owners of property affected, with some assistance from the Corporation, but it induced a belief that the Corporation ought to avail themselves of the power given them by the Act, and this ultimately resulted in action on the part of certain inhabitants for the improvement of the local government of the place. They were much strengthened by changes which had taken place in the tenancy of some of the principal houses. Sir William Hartopp had died in 1864, and his son, Sir John, let Four Oaks Hall in 1869 to Mr. James Chance. Moor Hall was occupied by Mr. S. S. Lloyd (afterwards M.P. for South Warwickshire) and Maney House was tenanted by Mr. J. Motteram, Q.C., Judge of the Birmingham County Court, all these gentlemen taking an intelligent interest in the sanitary question. In 1870 the subject was ventilated at the Aston Board of Guardians, and Mr. William Fowler,

who had succeeded to Mr. Colmore as chairman of that body, pointed out that the Nuisances Removal Act, in his opinion, threw the responsibility on the Warden and Society of Sutton Coldfield. They, however, after submitting a case to the opinion of Mr. Manisty (afterwards a judge), declined to adopt this view of the Act; and in the winter of 1870-71 a public meeting was held, at which a deputation was appointed to wait upon the Corporation to ask them to reconsider their position. After much discussion, the question being rather complicated in the minds of some of the parties engaged in it, by the fact that an agitation (though of a very uninfluential character), was being got up at that time against the mode of election to the Corporation, the Corporation consented to a joint case being prepared for the Attorney-General's opinion, by three of their own members, and Mr. Motteram, Mr. Chance, and the Rector (who had resigned his seat on the Corporation in 1869), on behalf of the memorialists. This was done; and the result was that the Corporation was held by Sir R. P. Collier, and Mr. Alfred Wills, to be partly a municipal body, and so to be the authority under the Act. Unfortunately in the new Public Health Act of 1872 the definition of Council did not contain the word "Warden," and the Corporation were thus relieved from the necessity of accepting the position thus imposed upon them.

Between 1861 and 1871 several public improvements had been carried out. In 1863-64 the Church was thoroughly repaired and re-roofed at an expense of more than £1,600, of which £600 was raised on security of church rate, and the rector contributed £500. The churchyard path was also fenced with iron palisades, and in 1869 the South Porch was thoroughly restored; the old iron railing of Bishop Vesey's tomb (1748) being used as gates. The rector also made a new road from the church to the corner of the lane leading to the Blabbs in 1870. The Corporation schools in the town were enlarged and remodelled in 1870, and in the same year the books of the permanent library were placed in the reading room of the Town Hall, with the intention of forming a public reference library under the trusteeship of the Warden, the Rector, and the Head Master. In 1871 Boldmere Church was enlarged at a cost of £1,400, raised by private subscription.

In 1869 a weekly newspaper entitled the "Sutton Coldfield and Erdington News" was started by a few gentlemen, who thought that a local organ of public opinion would be useful. This newspaper, after a chequered existence of about fifteen years, passed into the hands of the proprietor of the "Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Times," and is now published every Thursday under the title of the "Warwickshire Herald."

One of the most remarkable events of these years was the great fire in Sutton Park in the year 1868. This fire, which was

suspected to have been the act of an incendiary, commenced on the 3rd July, and consumed trees and woods in an area of over 500 acres of Sutton Park. It was not extinguished for several days, and then only by the greatest exertions on the part of Mr. Cooper and the Park staff and of the constabulary. The year 1868 was one of great heat and drought, no rain falling between April and August. Many fires occurred that summer throughout England in forests and commons.

In 1871 two lines of railway were proposed to pass through Sutton Park, one from Windley Pool by Rowton Well, and the other, the present Midland line, through the end of Blackroot Pool and Bracebridge Pool Dam to Streetly. A public meeting was called to consider the merits of the two lines, which was unfortunately not attended by a considerable section of the inhabitants who objected to any line through Sutton Park at all, and relied upon the precedent of 1845, as indicating the resolution of the Corporation to oppose all interference with the Park. The meeting decided that the line by Blackroot was the preferable one, and shortly afterwards the other line was withdrawn. The assertors of the integrity of the Park thereupon approached the Corporation, and received a resolution in reply that the Corporation would present a petition and retain Counsel "with a view of opposing the competing railways intended to pass through Sutton Park, in order to obtain the best possible accommodation for the town, and to watch over the interests of the Corporation as trustees of the Park." Unfortunately the construction put upon this resolution by a majority of the Corporation was not that which the memorialists expected. The railway projectors came to terms, and the Corporation opposition was withdrawn. But so strong was the feeling that the opponents, who now claimed to have the sympathy of the bulk of the inhabitants of Sutton, sought aid from Birmingham, and were assisted by several of the most influential men in the town and neighbourhood, notably by Mr. George Dawson, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. On the report of the Parliamentary Committee they raised a discussion in the House of Commons, alleging that the Corporation had "kept the word of promise to the ear, but broke it to the hope." Mr. John Bright, M.P. for Birmingham, and Mr. Bromley Davenport, M.P. for North Warwickshire, pleaded on their behalf, and the bill was sent to the House of Lords with the promise of a full enquiry before a committee of the Peers. This lasted a week, and although the opponents were under the disadvantage of being unable to bring forward evidence that a line passing to the north of Sutton Park without entering it would be equally convenient to the public, they were only defeated by the casting vote of the Chairman. It would be impossible were it desirable, to refer to the many unfortunate incidents of the struggle, suffice it to say that they

created a feeling in the minds of many who had hitherto been opposed to popular election of members of the Corporation, that the existing system ought not to be maintained—a feeling which before long began to exhibit itself in a variety of ways. One of the principal of these was the establishment of a Ratepayers' Association, which remained in active operation until its labours eventuated in obtaining Municipal Government in 1885. There were many reasons why large classes of the community were averse to the proposal to alter the constitution of the Corporation. Landowners dreaded the increase of municipal rates, labourers feared the withdrawal of gifts, privileges, and freedom from school payments; above all the outlying portions of the parish, who knew and cared less about Sutton town than any other market to which they resorted, were naturally jealous of a move in favour of urban rather than rural improvement, and considered themselves as about to be sacrificed to the interests of Sutton shopkeepers and villa residents. There were also many who, entirely sympathising in the view that the sanitary affairs of the place should be taken out of the hands of the Aston Board of Guardians, desired to see them placed in the hands of a Local Board, and the Corporation retained as the Governors of the Charitable Trust.

In 1875 the Birmingham Tame and Rea District Board was formed to secure the purification, as far as possible, of the river Tame, and Sutton was included in the district. But the point which brought the parish within the grasp of the Nuisances Removal Act was that the sewerage of the town, as before has been mentioned, found its way into the stream which runs down to the Birmingham Waterworks Reservoir at Plant's Brook. The old Birmingham Waterworks Company had, in 1869, proposed a scheme for obtaining their water supply from Sutton Park, but this had been opposed by the Corporation of Sutton and withdrawn, the company being unwilling to accede to the requirements of Sutton; and now the Town Council of Birmingham, who had taken over the water supply of their town, put the screw upon the parishioners of Sutton through the Aston Sanitary Authority. An abortive attempt was made in 1878 to meet the difficulty by obtaining power to erect a purifying tank near the Skinners Pools, but this the Government Inspector refused to sanction, and under the threat of an injunction, the present enormous and costly scheme was insisted upon. In 1875 a commission was authorised by Parliament to inquire into unreformed Corporations, and by the influence of the Ratepayers' Association a public meeting was held at which it was agreed to depute some representative witnesses on behalf of the inhabitants in addition to those tendered by the Corporation; the main object of this evidence being to secure municipal powers to the town, and to prevent, if possible, its being saddled with the

drainage scheme of a body (the Aston Union) on which it was so inadequately represented. The rector and Dr. Johnstone were among those selected, and were examined before the commission, as were Mr. H. Addenbrooke and Dr. G. Bodington. The evidence will be found in the Parliamentary Blue Book. Sutton Coldfield was placed in consequence among those corporations which were considered eligible to obtain municipal charters on application.

In 1877 the Charity Commissioners promulgated a scheme for the appropriation of the revenues of the Grammar School estate, and charity estate of the Corporation, jointly. The history of the scheme may be thus briefly given. As long before as 1867, the head-master of the Grammar School, finding the school buildings, even as improved in 1860, very inadequate and inconvenient, suggested the purchase of the Royal Hotel, which had at that time been closed. This plan the Governors were unable to carry out, but they agreed to ask the Charity Commissioners for power to erect new buildings, and in 1869 the Corporation passed a resolution to devote a sum of money to the purpose of the improvement of the school. In 1875 Mr. Stanton, the assistant commissioner, proposed a scheme for the enlargement of the school, which excited some alarm among residents, and a parish meeting was called to discuss the question, at which it was decided that the principle of popular representation was not sufficiently recognised in the management of the educational establishments of the place. The Ratepayers' Association took up the matter, and induced the Commissioners to frame a more comprehensive scheme for the whole education of Sutton; their object being to form a connection between all the schools from the highest to the lowest grade, and have the management centred in one governing body; the whole of the estates of the two foundations being amalgamated under the same management. Against this scheme a vehement agitation was set on foot, with the result of an adverse vote at a public meeting, and a largely signed petition against it; and an opposition being threatened by the Corporation, the Commissioners declined to proceed with it, and only carried out the portion relating to the Grammar School, which came into operation in 1882.

It was, however, impossible to stay the gradual extinction of the old Corporation. Dr. Johnstone—warden in 1879—promoted a petition for a municipal charter, and an enquiry was held by the Hon. Thomas Pelham; a counter petition being presented by certain owners and occupiers of land and others within the boundaries of the borough. The objectors were represented by Mr. Joseph Rowlands, and succeeded in preventing the grant of a charter; but in 1883 the passing of Sir Charles Dilke's bill, founded on the report of the Parliamentary Commission, extinguished the whole of the Corporations who were not appointed

under the Municipal Act, and it became necessary to decide whether a petition for a new Charter should be presented or whether the county should absorb the borough. Even at that late hour some were found who desired the extinction of the municipal privileges, considering the cost of government by a Town Council too great for the advantages to be derived from it; while others advocated the incorporation of a part only of the area, and the exclusion from the borough of what are now Hill and Walmley Wards. As this last proposition was not feasible, scarcely any active opposition was offered to the scheme of incorporation, and the boundaries being settled and six wards created, the Charter was received in April, 1886. The sketch thus given of the gradual progress of self government is but a meagre one; the writer confesses himself not only unable, but unwilling, to record in detail events in which he was a conspicuous agent, and of which therefore he can scarcely trust himself to write impartially. Endeavouring to discard all bias, he finds it necessary to avoid personal allusions, and leaves it to some future chronicler to give, as might well be done from the Corporation journals and the columns of the local press, a full and particular detail of the debates and divisions which occurred during the "fight for the Charter."

Public improvement had still gone on during the progress of these governmental changes. In 1879 the Parish Church was enlarged by the addition of a new aisle and south gallery, the old west and south galleries being taken down and the tower arch opened to the church. A vestry had previously been erected in 1874. The chancel was ornamented by screens of carved oak of beautiful renaissance work brought from Worcester Cathedral, where they had been placed in the reign of Charles the Second by Bishop Fleetwood, once rector of Sutton. By the additions now made over 200 seats were placed at the disposal of the public. In 1884 the bells were thoroughly repaired, and two more added, making eight in all, by Messrs. Taylor of Loughborough. In 1880 the churchyard was closed by an order in council, and a new cemetery was provided on the east of the town, to which access was obtained by substituting for the narrow and crooked lane which led past the Rectory, a more convenient highway, from which the cemetery is reached by a branch road, to be extended ultimately across the Grammar School estate. The cemetery is in extent about four acres, and its buildings, erected in the half timbered style of black and white, generally associated with old Worcestershire houses, comprise a lodge and lychgate, and a suitable chapel for funeral services. One half of the ground was consecrated by the Bishop of Worcester in 1880. The order of the Council which prohibits the making of new graves in the churchyard also restricts interments to vaults, and brick graves, or in earthen graves to relatives in the first degree (parents, child-

ren, husbands, wives, brothers, and sisters). This cemetery pertains to the parish of Holy Trinity only, the district churches being each provided with a graveyard. In the case of Hill Church, an extension of the churchyard is in progress. In 1881 a Congregational Church was erected in Park Road, and in 1888 a Wesleyan one upon what it now called the Parade, viz., the road between Mill-street and Maney. About half a mile upon the Birmingham-road an iron chapel of ease to the Parish Church had been placed, in 1878, to afford facilities for public worship to that neighbourhood, and in 1880 a barn beyond Whitehouse Common was fitted up for the same purpose. The cost of these and of the church additions was defrayed by the rector. The new governors, who entered upon the work of superintending the Grammar School foundation in 1882, were directed to construct new school buildings. These were opened in 1887, having been erected by Messrs. Barnsley, builders, of Birmingham, from the designs of Mr. Cossens, architect, of the same place; they immediately join the old school house of 1728, and while vastly superior in architectural merit, harmonise with its style. Several additions have been made to the elementary schools of the borough, and others are still in contemplation, these are (pending the carrying out of a scheme for their management), under the control of certain members of the old Corporation, who accepted the position of "interim trustees" of the charity estate. There are two schools in the town of Sutton (boys and girls), two infant schools, one in Sutton, and one in Maney, a mixed school (of girls and infants) near the church at Boldmere, a boys' school close to Chester-road Station, a mixed school of girls and infants at Walmley, two schools, girls' and boys', at Mere Pool, near the village of Hill, an infant school in the same locality, and another infant school at Roughly. There is one independent place of education, St. Joseph's School, Roman Catholic, in the town of Sutton.

The municipal buildings consist of the Town Hall erected in 1859, which has been improved and enlarged, and connected with the old Workhouse, which is devoted to official purposes. The confined nature of the site presented many difficulties which have been successfully grappled with by the Borough Surveyor. The room adjoining the entrance is still retained as a subscription library and reading room, while what was formerly the justice room is now fitted up for the council chamber, and on its walls are displayed the old halberds and brown bills of the town guard, some of which may date from the time of Henry VIII, with a constable's staff of a Georgian reign. The ancient stocks are also kept upon the premises. The bench of Justice and the cells for prisoners are now placed in Station-street, in a convenient building erected by the County Buildings Committee of the Justices of Warwickshire, under the superintendence of

their surveyor, Mr. Lait, which was opened in 1888. As the town possesses a commission of the peace, the county magistrates, as such, do not perform any duties within the borough.

To these public buildings has been added another, erected by public subscription, in honour of the Jubilee of Her Majesty's reign. It is used as a public dispensary, and is situated at the head of the Rectory-road, opposite to the south-east gate of the Churchyard. Messrs. Proud and Faulkner were the architects, Messrs. Jones and Lloyd the builders.

What additional development may be in store for the re-chartered Royal Town is a matter upon which it is only possible to speculate. It may be hoped that wisdom and caution will be exercised in the future, and that the mistakes of the past will be avoided. Properly governed Sutton Coldfield may become the best residential town in the district, but if ephemeral popularity is to be the measure of its ambition it may very speedily lose the standing it has already attained. To endeavour to please all parties invariably leads to disaster. The policy of the governors of the place clearly points to the introduction of quiet substantial residents, and not the encouragement of mere occasional visitors, two classes which rarely exist together, and although there may be room for both, there should be no effort made to foster the latter. Degrading immoral amusements, silly and un-intellectual public displays, and all the lower forms of attracting notoriety are positively injurious. The School of Art, the Mutual Improvement Society, and other modes of intellectual elevation, combine with the natural beauties which are the pride and treasure of the place to make it worthy of every care which the rising generation can bestow upon its amenities, and its institutions should be maintained with constant vigilance and tender consideration, not in the spirit of blind devotion, but "broadening down from precedent to precedent."

CHAPTER X

The Parish Church

FROM the catalogue of the incumbents given by Dugdale, the church appears to have been erected in the early part of the 14th century, as the first appointment of a parish priest dates from 1305. Of this building scarcely any remains can be traced, as the restorations of 1533, 1760, and the present decade have effaced any characteristic features of the original architecture. It is probable that the lower stage of the tower, and the wall immediately below the east window may have been portions of the first church, to which Bishop Vesey added two aisles, while the battlements, both of the tower and body of the church, furnish traces of his work. The stone with the rude carving of arms near the west door of the tower, is however, of modern erection in its present site, having been brought from the "yew

tree" house, which formerly stood above the Midland railway bridge in High-street. Other carvings from the same house are inserted in the basement on the north side of the church, just opposite to the spot where in the old wall was a north door, long built up, which is presumed to have been the peculiar entrance of the ranger of the royal forest. A similar entrance, in the same position, at Geddington Church, Northamptonshire, is known as the "King's Door."

For many years the western entrance to the church was closed, and its position occupied by a window of cast iron tracery, now in the building at Silvester's Field licensed for divine Service. This window gave light to a vestry, which was formed in 1828, in lieu of one which had existed in the south-east side-chapel of the chancel, probably since the alterations of 1760. At the same time the door to the belfry was made external instead of opening into the floor of the tower. At the rebuilding of 1760, the tower arch had been built up, and intersected by the floor of the ringing chamber. In front of the arch was a large deep gallery erected by Lord Foliot, and known as the Four Oaks Gallery, while another on a higher level contained the organ and seats for singers; these were approached by a stair from the west end of the south aisle; and were removed in 1879, when the arch was opened, the ringers' floor sent higher up, and the ancient door of access to the belfry stair restored. The level of the old ringing chamber is now marked by a small balcony fronted by the old Communion rails of Worcester Cathedral, while the vestibule, or inner porch, beneath, is of carved oak from Worcester and from St. Michael's, Coventry, the handles of the doors being brass dolphins from Valletta. On the floor of the tower, which descends by steps into the church, is placed a font which came originally from the Norman church of Over Whitacre, superseded in the eighteenth century by an edifice in the taste of that era, with which the Norman font being incongruous, it was cast out and used as a horse block at the inn at Shustoke; from whence it was rescued by Mr. Sadler, who brought it to Sutton Coldfield, and placed it in his garden; and his son, Mr. Richard Sadler, gave it to the church in 1856, when it was relieved of its many coats of paint, and lined with the white marble basin which, from the renovation in 1760, had stood, supported on a classic pedestal, as the font. A brass plate on the base records these facts. The bells in Edward the Sixth's reign were five, at which number they probably remained until 1784, when the Corporation voted 100 guineas for six new bells; these were recast by Mears, in 1795, and two more added by Taylor, of Loughborough, in 1884.

By the side of the Four Oaks gallery, was a smaller one erected under a faculty in the last century, for the use of the Lawley family of Canwell Hall. This, and a gallery covering the

north aisle were approached by a staircase in the north-west corner, and a south gallery, still existing, by another staircase from the south door. From 1828 to 1868 two other galleries existed over the two chancel side-chapels, which were approached by narrow little winding stairs from two small doors in the east wall, one of which still gives entrance to the organ. These were appropriated to school children.

The round arches of the nave are not (as cursory observers might imagine) of Norman origin, but are the attempts of the builders of 1760 to imitate the lines of the bishop's addition to the chancel, in which Mr. Bloxham found a resemblance to the renaissance mouldings of a Parisian church. The two westernmost arches of the nave, which supported the Four Oaks gallery, are smaller than the others, and the present clerestory windows, imitated from a pattern of Tudor times, replaced at the restoration of 1863 round headed squat apertures, while a flat ceiling covered with lead was replaced by the present roof, which unhappily was pitched about two feet higher than the water table on the tower, which indicated the height of the former ridge tiles. The whole of the interior of the fabric was up to that time covered with whitewash, in removing which traces of inscriptions were discovered near the east window, evidently the "Godly sentences," which, at the Reformation, were directed to replace the "superstitious pictures" previously in vogue. There is no ancient stained glass, nor, with the exception of the altar tomb of Bishop Vesey, any monument of more than seventeenth century date. The carved oak screens and seats in the chancel are part of the old choir and organ loft of Worcester Cathedral removed at the time of its restoration, twenty years ago. The organ loft portion, which faces the north door, is of Jacobean character, and dates from 1618. It was identified by the arms of Prebendary Barksdale painted upon it, as one of the donors of the organ. The columns and seats for the choir and the reredos round the altar are of Italian design, and were given to the Cathedral by Bishop Fleetwood (1675-83) who had been nominated to Sutton in 1642, by King Charles the First. It is curious that the only personal coat of arms upon this portion of the work, is that of the family of Lucas, not connected either with Fleetwood or Worcester. The pulpit, with its handsome canopy of inlaid work, is probably of the date of 1760, and not that once occupied by Dr. Sacheverell. The organ was erected by Gray and Davidson in 1863. The present rails of the Communion table are of modern date, superseding old ones, higher, and less convenient, which are now utilized at the back of the north gallery.* A porch and vestry have been erected at the north-eastern angle of the church. The old south porch was re-

* A new Altar Table has been presented to the Church as a memorial of the late Mrs. Bedford, who died in 1890.

paired, and windows which had been bricked up, restored in 1869. The gates are the iron rails, of the date of 1748 from Vesey's tomb.

The east window of stained glass, by Gibbs (of London), was placed in its present position in 1863 in memory—as a tile by its side records—of the Rev. W. R. Bedford, rector from 1822 to 1843. At the head of the window is a figure of our Lord in Glory, attended by angels, holding emblems of the Trinity and the Holy Ghost, while He is adored by four figures—a prophet (St. John the Baptist); an apostle (St. Peter); a martyr (St. Paul); these two last being the saints to whom Exeter Cathedral is dedicated; and a bishop (Vesey)—representing the Church on earth. In the five lights below are represented the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Shepherds, the Crucifixion, the Baptism, and the Agony in the Garden; angelic figures below hold appropriate texts.

The east window of the north aisle is filled with glass by Ballantine (of Edinburgh). It consists of four lights, each of which commemorates one of the four bishops connected with Sutton, as well as being a memorial of some individual parishioner. Thus, the first from the north has, at the top, the arms of Chichester impaling Arundel, and represents the healing of King Hezekiah by Isaiah the Prophet; Arundel having been physician to King Henry VI, and rector of Sutton Coldfield, 1431. This was given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Sadler, whose arms are below. The next, given in memory of the Rev. James Packwood, curate of Sutton for 40 years, and capital burgess, who died in 1869, has at the top, the arms of Exeter impaling Vesey, and its subject is Joseph requesting from Pharaoh a grant of the Lands of Goshen for his brethren—in allusion to Vesey's having obtained a Royal Charter and Grant of Sutton Park for his townsmen. The third, with the arms of Lichfield impaling Hacket, depicts Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and Haggai engaged in the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem—referring to Bishop Hacket being the restorer of Lichfield Cathedral after its spoilation. This was erected as a tribute to the public services of Mr. Colmore, who resided at Ashfurlong, once Hacket family property, and died in 1870. The fourth, which was inserted as a memorial of the wife and two sons of the late Mr. William Smith, of Ivy House, High Street, has, under the arms of Worcester impaling Fleetwood, a representation of Elisha teaching in the schools of the prophets—Dr. Fleetwood, appointed rector in 1642, being eminent as a tutor at Oxford.

An adjacent window of smaller dimensions, over the north door, was filled with glass at the expense of the late Miss Sarah Holbeche, as a memento of Dr. R. Williamson (rector from 1843 to 1850), and contains the Exeter arms under a mitre, with those of Vesey and of Williamson. At the western end of the south

aisle a small window of two lights is filled with figures (by Ballantine and Son), representing the Resurrection, and Christ with a child—in memory of the mother of the present rector, and of one of his children.

Of monumental brasses the church has been robbed at some time previous to the publication of Dugdale's volume in 1656, as he gives engravings of two in the north aisle marked "gone." There is still a slab with blank spaces from which brass plates have been torn in the pavement of the north side-chapel, but the vacant outlines do not precisely correspond with either of the engravings in the "History of Warwickshire." Both the lost brasses commemorated members of the Harman family. There are two small brasses in the chancel, now placed in the wall, but formerly on the floor—one, representing a woman in hood, ruff, and farthingale, with a child on each side of her, commemorates Mrs. Barbara Eliot, wife of Roger Eliot, rector from 1595 to 1617. She died in 1606, aged 23. The other, a man in furred gown, Josias Bull, gent., who died in 1621, about the age of 50 years. Effigies of his children appear upon another brass below, and above a coat of arms, three annulets in fess, between three bulls' heads, erased at neck, a crescent for difference (Bull) impaling a chevron between three covered cups, an annulet for difference (Butler) for his wife, Katherine Walshe, widow, daughter to William Boteler, of Tyes, in Essex.

Of modern brasses the finest is a very beautiful floriated cross, in memory of Sir William Edward Cradock Hartopp, Bart., who died in 1864; adjacent to which is a smaller one in memory of his widow. Another, under the north-east window, bears a coat of arms, Sadler impaling Bamford. Another, with an inscription recording the services of Thomas Colmore, Esq., warden and capital burgess, a magistrate for Warwickshire, and chairman of the Aston Board of Guardians, has two coats of arms (Colmore and Blayney) and two crests enamelled in the angles of its margin. There is another interesting modern brass with an inscription in raised letters, to the memory of Bernard Winder, who lost his life in battle in Canada, in 1885. Near these are two tiles, one with arms of Webster impaling Montagu, to the memory of Captain Peter Webster, formerly 8th Hussars, and Adjutant of the Staffordshire Yeomanry, who died in 1877; and the other to one of his daughters. There is another tile over the reading desk, to the memory of Lucy Riland, who died 1869.

Of the older monuments the finest and most interesting is that of Bishop Vesey—an altar tomb, with a recumbent effigy in the full episcopal vestments in use before the Reformation. The effigy was, in the opinion of the best judges, executed from life, but the original base was destroyed in 1748 when the present inscription was engraved at the expense of Sir John Wyrley, of Hamstead, a family now represented by Mr. Wyrley Birch, of

Wretham, Norfolk, and the effigy was placed above it in a niche in the wall, from whence it was removed, and the present tomb erected over the actual grave in 1875. On the east wall of the north aisle is a large marble monument to William Jesson, of Langley, son of Sir Wm. Jesson, Knight, of the New House, Coventry, and of his wife, Anne, daughter of Henry Pudsey, of Langley, Esq. At the top are the arms of Jesson and Pudsey quarterly, with a crest, an arm bent at the elbow and cased in armour, the hand holding a flower. At the foot are the arms of Jesson impaling Adderley, with the arms of Freeman in an escutcheon of pretence. Wm. Jesson died aged 58, in 1725, his son, who is also commemorated, in 1728, aged 28. Above the tomb of the Bishop are two slabs, inserted in the wall, bearing copies of the original inscriptions to his father, William, and his brother, Hugh Harman. On the side of the north door are small tablets to three children of William and Anne Jesson, and beyond them an elaborate erection with two busts for Henry Pudsey, son and heir of George Pudsey, of Langley, who died in 1677, aged 44, and his wife, Jane, daughter of Francis Thornhagh, of Fenton, Notts. The arms above are those of Pudsey with five quarterings, impaling Thornhagh. The lady's second husband, Sir William Wilson, has a monumental stone upon the opposite side of the wall, now within the vestry. He died in 1710. Two other tablets complete the records of the Jesson family, William Jesson, who died in 1786, aged 56; his son, William Ash Jesson, who died in 1776, aged 22; and the last representative, William Jesson Pearson, of the 14th Light Dragoons, who died at Lisbon in 1810.

There is a modern monument to Robert Rochford, died 1876. On the opposite column is a tablet surmounted by a hawk's head, the Hacket crest, to John Hacket, of Moor Hall, and the Rev. Richard Hacket, rector of Beckingham, both of whom died in 1810.

In the chancel there are marble tablets to Richard Bisse Riland, rector for 32 years, and a prebendary of the Cathedral of Lichfield, who died, aged 56 years, in 1790, and to John Riland, his brother and successor, who died in 1822, aged 85; also to Ann Ash, of Paston, sister-in-law of Richard Bisse Riland, who died in 1789, with an escutcheon of arms above the tablet. There is also a carved and painted monument on the south pillar to Katherine Holden, wife of Samuel Holden, of Erdington, and daughter of John Astley, of Wolvey, "descended from ye Ancient and Honourable famaley of ye Astleys in Warwickshair." The arms above are Holden impaling Astley.

On the screen in front of the reading desk are the arms of the two Bishops of Worcester: Fleetwood, in whose time the oak was placed in the Cathedral, and Philpott, in whose time it was removed. On the south wall is a marble monument with a

long Latin inscription to John Barnes, a youth who died in 1730. On the opposite pillar is one to Joseph Duncumb, who died in 1793, and to his daughter Elizabeth, wife of S. F. S. Perkins, who died 1801. The shield below contains the arms of Perkins quartering Steele, Shirley, and Farmer, with Duncumb in an escutcheon of pretence. Returning to the wall again, there is a monument to Mr. Thomas Holbeche, who died in 1848, with an escutcheon of arms below it.

At the west end of the same aisle is an elaborately-carved memorial to George Sacheverell, of New Hall, who died, aged 82, in 1715—to his two wives, and to his brother, Valens Sacheverell—it is surmounted by the arms of Sacheverell with quarterings. Upon the wall of the tower are tablets to the Rev. Joseph Mendham, and his wife and their son, the Rev. R. R. Mendham, who died in 1857; to Charles Barker, B.C.L., master of the Grammar School, who died in 1842; to John Oughton and his widow, who died 1859; and to William Smith, of Hollyfield, and his wife, who died in 1838.

Above these hang the old flag of the Sutton Friendly and Benefit Club, presented on the formation of the club in 1845 by the then rector's niece and ward, Lady Mowbray; and from the west wall over the tower arch, hangs the colour presented by Lady Hartopp to the Sutton Volunteers on their embodiment in 1797. This has been removed from a similar situation in the chancel since 1863. It was taken down again, and used as a pall at the funeral of the last survivor of the corps, Mr. George Browne. On the east wall of the nave, with tablets of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, are the Royal Arms, apparently of the date of Charles II.

PATRONS AND RECTORS OF SUTTON COLDFIELD

Earl of Warwick ..	Gregory Harold ..	A.D. 1305
The Crown in minority of Patron }	Robert Hilary ..	1317
	William Shepragg ..	1326
Earl of Warwick ..	John De Buckingham ..	1345
	William de Shameburne	1348
	Simon Basset de Sapçote	1349
	William de Barton ..	1361
	Ralph de Friseby ..	1361
	Roger de Tangleby ..	1382
	Nicholas Stokes ..	1389
	Ralph Bromley ..	1391
	Thomas Henster ..	1391
	Richard Penne ..	1397
Thomas Holland, Duke of Surrey }	John de Malverne ..	1397
The Crown in minority of Patron ..	Richard Penne ..	1401
Earl of Warwick ..	Lewis Beelte ..	1412
John Verney, &c., for Patron beyond seas }	John Arundel ..	1431
Earl of Warwick ..	John Adams ..	1433
	Thomas Hill ..	1436
	John Stones ..	1463
	Richard Brackenbergh..	1469
Crown	Edward Scott, L.L.D. ..	1499
	John Taylor, D.D. ..	1504
	George Heneage, L.L.D.	1516
	John Burges, S.T.B. ..	1521
	Ralph Wendon ..	1527
Thomas Gybons ..	John Fodon ..	1563
Crown (?) ..	Peter Sankye ..	1583
Elizabeth Elyot, widow	Roger Elyot ..	1595
Robert Shilton ..	John Burges, M.D. ..	1617
	Anthony Burges, D.D...	*1635
John Shilton ..	William Watson ..	1662
	John Riland, M.A. ..	1689
Richard Riland ..	Richard Riland, M.A. ..	1720
Richard Bisse Riland ..	Richard Bisse Riland, M.A.	1758
John Riland ..	John Riland, M.A. ..	1790
William Bedford ..	William Riland Bedford, M.A.	1822
William Kirkpatrick Riland Bedford }	Richard Williamson, D.D.	1843
	W. K. R. Bedford, M.A.	1850

* In 1642 the Crown presented James Fleetwood, D.D., to the Rectory, but he was not inducted.

**LIST OF WARDENS
OF THE CORPORATION OF SUTTON FROM THE
DATE OF THE FIRST CHARTER**

1529	William Gibbons, 1557
1530	John Leveson
1531	Thomas Keen, 1538, 1566
1532	Thomas Hurst
1533	Thomas Gibbons, 1542
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