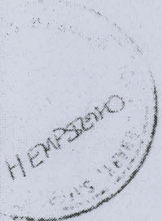


P.100I met the lady who afterwards became my wife (Miss Mary Frances Andrews, second daughter of the late Thomas Andrews, Esq. of Wynchlow Hall, Hempstead, Essex.)



CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE AND VISIT TO ITALY, 1871-73

THE extreme happiness of the first six months of our engagement was sadly clouded in the winter of 1870-71 by the illness of my lady, from the depressing effects of which she did not recover for a long time.

In the summer of 1871 she was induced to visit her old home at Hempstead, in Essex. Her eldest brother with his wife then occupied the house and managed the farm. I went down in due course on a visit, and was much charmed by the delightful old-world feeling of the place, the fine old Essex farmhouses which abounded in the neighbourhood, with their Tudor chimney-stacks and wide fireplaces, and the old-fashioned hospitality of their tenants.

Hempstead itself is historically interesting owing to the fact of its association with Dr. William Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, in the seventeenth century. His family seat, the old Wynchlow Hall, had been pulled down, and only the moat remained, though a cottage marked the site of the house. The Doctor's monument, however, was in the village church, a marble bust on a bracket in front of a wall tablet with a Latin inscription, placed by the Royal College of Surgeons, the family arms and a seventeenth-century helmet above.

Beneath the Harvey chapel annexed to the church was the Harvey family vault—a large brick chamber to which one descended by steps, and this was filled with leaden coffins of an ancient type, shaped somewhat like terminal figures, each bearing a face embossed in relief upon it at the head of the coffin, and the name and date beneath.

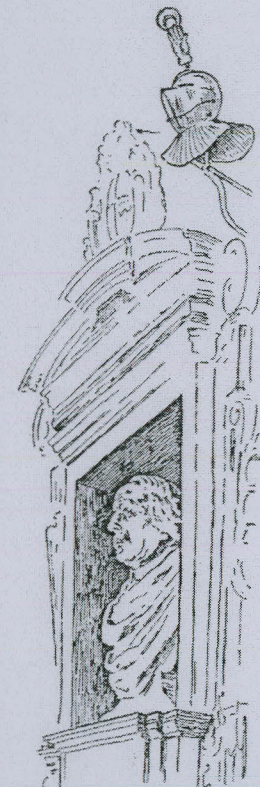
There were also several brasses in the church of fourteenth and fifteenth century date.

Squire Andrews' farm, called Wynchlow Hall, had been originally an old half-timbered house, with steep gables, and plaster panels worked in patterns between the timber framing, after the traditional local style; but the main part of the dwelling-house had been modernised, and only one wing remained of the old part, which had probably been surrounded by a moat, a relic of which formed a considerable pond at the edge of the lawn, gay that June-tide with yellow flags.

Near by was a charming old house known as Church Farm, an ancient half-timbered L-shaped house with fine brick chimneys, and a few "Queen Anne" additions in the way of a pillared porch and a china cupboard. There had been a wide ingle-nook, which still retained the original iron crane or ratchet for cooking over the fire or roasting before it—a good piece of blacksmith's work.

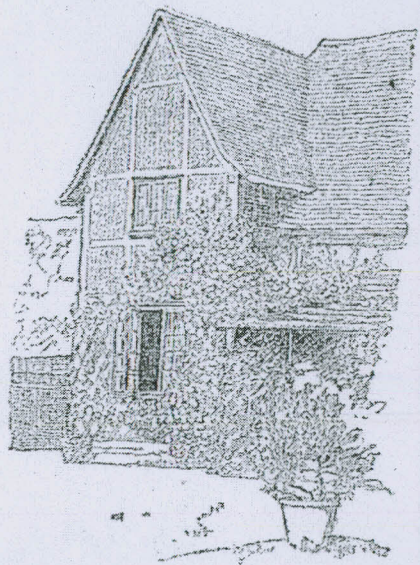
An interesting sight was the sheep-shearing in the great barn. The big doors were taken off their hinges and laid flat, and on this improvised platform the shearers did their work. There were three of them, and it was noteworthy to see the skill with which they handled both the sheep and the shears, getting the heavy fleeces off with the greatest neatness and despatch, the sheep for the most part being very passive in their hands, and certainly "before the shearers—dumb."

A little before my visit to Hempstead I had been commissioned by Mr. Somerset Beaumont to go down to Northumberland to make for him two drawings, one of



MONUMENT TO DR. WILLIAM HARVEY, HEMPSTEAD CHURCH

Bywell Castle, and another of two churches which are features of the place. Both subjects were by the river Tyne, here flowing past the ivy-covered keep of the old Castle in falls over a rocky bed. The seat of the Beaumonts was near by. The country was a fine one, and beautifully wooded. I stayed at a little old-fashioned village inn, and worked at my drawings all day. I was greatly struck with the character and beauty of the Border country, and visited the fine old town of Hexham, with its noble church; and Mr. George



THE OLD HOUSE AT HEMPSTEAD, ESSEX

Howard was kind enough to give me the opportunity of seeing the very beautiful family Castle of the Howards—Naworth, although they were not living there at the time. So I travelled along the Newcastle & Carlisle Railway one day, and alighting at the little station close to the park gates, walked to the Castle, famous as the home of "Belted Will" (Lord William Howard of Border fame), whose tower and library of books is still shown to visitors. I also had sight of Lanercost Priory, a beautiful ruin down in the valley by the stream which flows around the Castle. At the Castle was Mr. Ferguson, the architect of Carlisle, who at that time had been called in for some restoration work at the Priory, and who afterwards added a new wing to the Castle.

At that time the Earl of Carlisle was living in retirement, and the next heir was his brother, the Hon. Charles Howard, the father of Mr. George Howard, who had extended to me so much friendliness, sympathy, and courtesy at that time.

Deeply as the beauty and romance of the Border country

appealed to me, my heart was really elsewhere—in fact, at Hastings, where a certain lady was staying, and where before June was over I found myself. How the time went I hardly know, so quickly fled those summer days by the sparkling sea, and along the downs to Fairlight Glen, beloved of lovers, and immortalised by Mr. Holman Hunt in one of his most beautiful landscape studies of the early pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood days. Our marriage was at last fixed for the following September—the 6th, Mrs. Andrews and her daughters taking up their abode some weeks before in Chandos Street, as the destined temple was All Souls', Langham Place—commonly known as the "extinguisher" church, from its peculiar plain conical spire.

I had duly paid my visit to an old gentleman seated in a dingy office in Doctors' Commons, to whose presence I was conducted, feeling rather nervous, by one of the harmless necessary ticket porters in a little white apron, as described by Dickens. There I duly took a solemn oath, and secured (for a trifling consideration) that priceless and momentous document, a marriage license. There were wedding breakfasts in those days, and even speeches,—but all was over at last, and escaping from the friendly shower of shoes and rice, we were soon rumbling through darkest London in a brougham and tell-tale pair of greys to Liverpool Street Station. Somewhere in the wilds of the City one of our horses fell, and we were soon surrounded by a grinning London crowd, some members of which, however, lent willing hands to get the horse up, and this at last accomplished, presented themselves at the carriage window for tips.

We had planned an extensive tour to Italy by way of the Rhine and the Brenner Pass, but the journey was to be taken in easy stages. The little green books of tickets, from Messrs. Cook's at that time modest office in Fleet Street, allowed for plenty of stoppages on our honeymoon-pilgrimage to Rome. We went by way of Harwich and Antwerp, but rested at Harwich the first night or two, and took the night boat on the 9th, and after a calm passage experienced the feeling of delightful strangeness of being in foreign parts on steaming up the Scheldt to Antwerp in