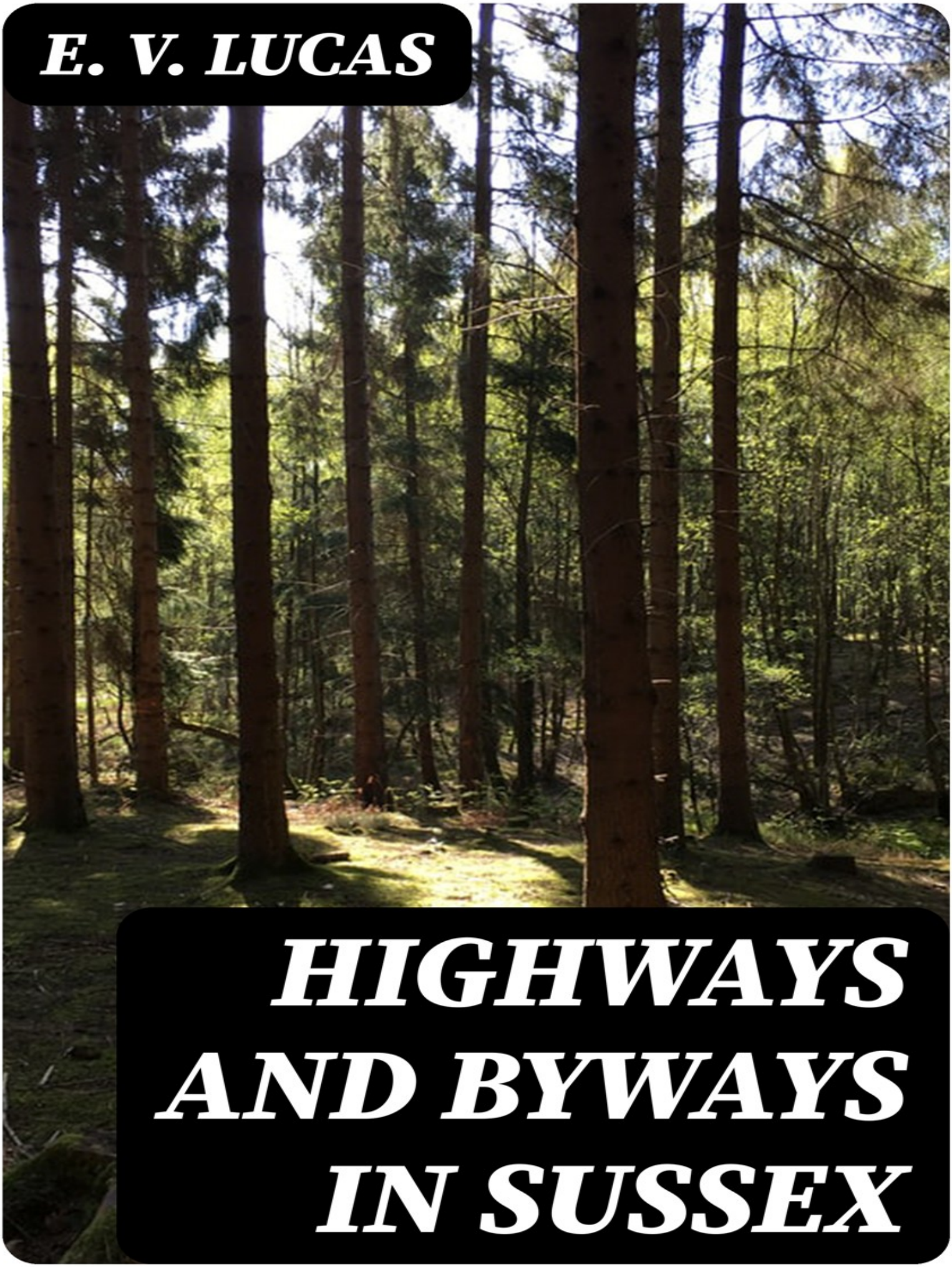
E. V. LUCAS
HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN SUSSEX

E. V. Lucas

Highways and Byways in Sussex

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PREFACE

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Readers who are acquainted with the earlier volumes of this series will not need to be told that they are less guide-books than appreciations of the districts with which they are concerned. In the pages that follow my aim has been to gather a Sussex bouquet rather than to present the facts which the more practical traveller requires.

The order of progress through the country has been determined largely by the lines of railway. I have thought it best to enter Sussex in the west at Midhurst, making that the first centre, and to zig-zag thence across to the east by way of Chichester, Arundel, Petworth, Horsham, Brighton (I name only the chief centres), Cuckfield, East Grinstead, Lewes, Eastbourne, Hailsham, Hastings, Rye, and Tunbridge Wells; leaving the county finally at Withyham, on the borders of Ashdown Forest. For the traveller in a carriage or on a bicycle this route is not the best; but for those who would explore it slowly on foot (and much of the more characteristic scenery of Sussex can be studied only in this way), with occasional assistance from the train, it is, I think, as good a scheme as any.

I do not suggest that it is necessary for the reader who travels through Sussex to take the same route: he would probably prefer to cover the county literally strip by strip—the Forest strip from Tunbridge Wells to Horsham, the Weald strip from Billingshurst to Burwash, the Downs strip from Racton to Beachy Head—rather than follow my course, north to south, and south to north, across the land. But the book is, I think, the gainer by these tangents, and certainly its author is happier, for they bring him again and again back to the Downs.

It is impossible at this date to write about Sussex, in accordance with the plan of the present series, without saying a great many things that others have said before, and without making use of the historians of the county. To the collections of the Sussex Archæological Society I am greatly indebted; also to Mr. J. G. Bishop's *Peep into the Past*, and to Mr. W. D. Parish's *Dictionary of the Sussex Dialect*. Many other works are mentioned in the text.

The history, archæology, and natural history of the county have been thoroughly treated by various writers; but there are, I have noticed, fewer books than there should be upon Sussex men and women. Carlyle's saying that every clergyman should write the history of his parish (which one might amend to the history of his parishioners) has borne too little fruit in our district; nor have lay observers arisen in any number to atone for the shortcoming. And yet Sussex must be as rich in good character, pure, quaint, shrewd, humorous or noble, as any other division of England. In the matter of honouring illustrious Sussex men and women, the late Mark Antony Lower played his part with *The Worthies of Sussex*, and Mr. Fleet with *Glimpses of Our Sussex Ancestors*; but the Sussex "Characters," where are they? Who has set down their "little unremembered acts," their eccentricities, their sterling southern tenacities? The Rev. AD Gordon wrote the history of Harting, and quite recently the Rev. C. N. Sutton has published his interesting *Historical Notes of Withyham, Hartfield, and Ashdown Forest*; and there may be other similar parish histories which I am forgetting. But the only books that I have seen which make a patient and sympathetic attempt to understand the people of Sussex are Mr. Parish's *Dictionary*, Mr. Egerton's *Sussex Folk and Sussex Ways*, and "John Halsham's" *Idlehurst*. How many rare qualities of head and heart must go unrecorded in rural England.

I have to thank my friend Mr. C. E. Clayton for his kindness in reading the proofs of this book and in suggesting additions.

E. V. L.

December 12, 1903.

P.S.—The sheets of the one-inch ordnance map of Sussex are fourteen in all, their numbers running thus:

300 Alresford	301 Haslemere	302 Horsham	303 T. Wells	304 Tenterden
316 Fareham	317 Chichester	318 Brighton	319 Lewes	320 Hastings
331 Portsmouth	332 Bognor	333 Worthing	334 Eastbourne	

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

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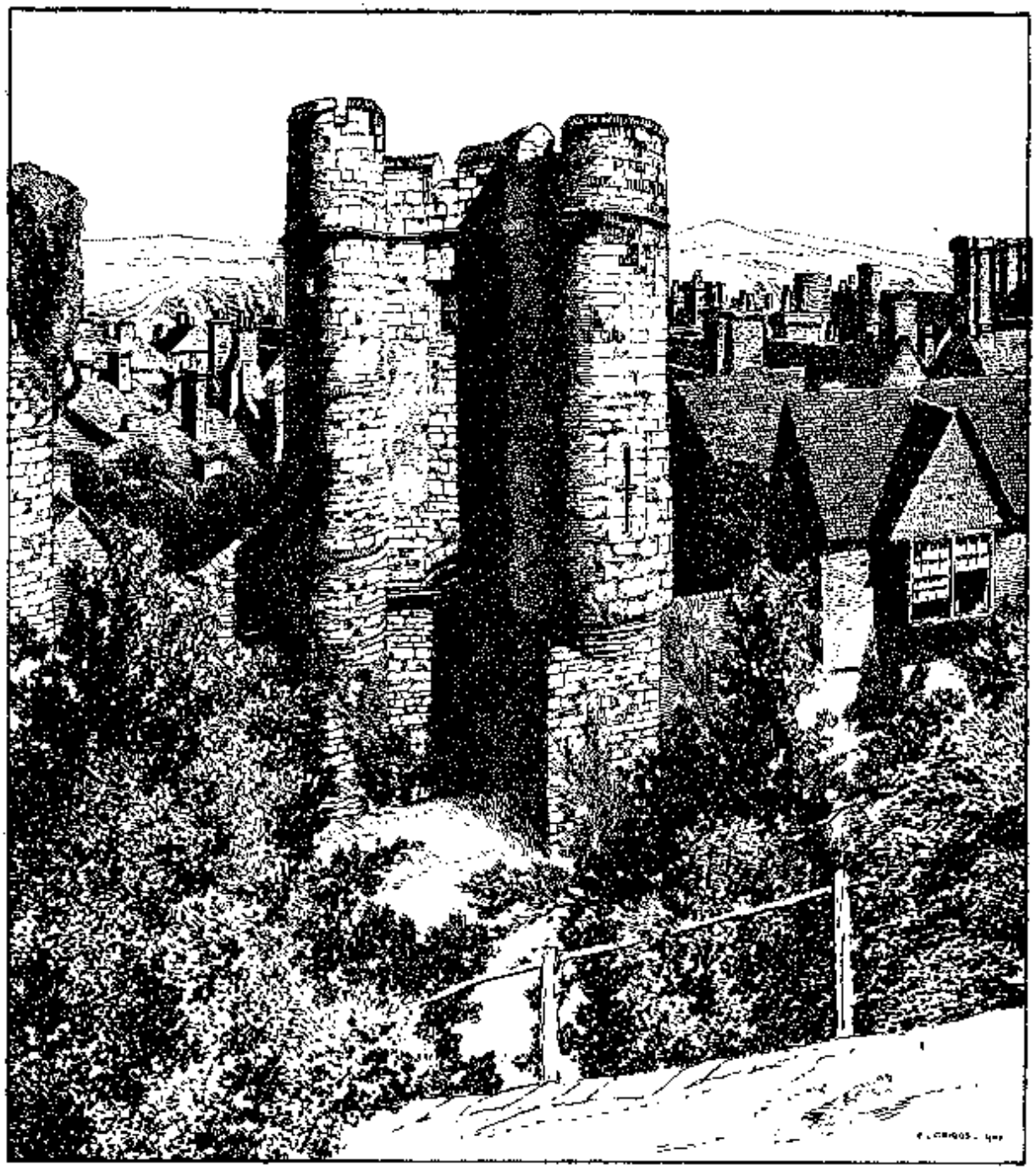
In the present edition a number of small errors have been corrected and a new chapter amplifying certain points and supplying a deficit here and there has been added. The passage about Stane Street is reprinted from the *Times Literary Supplement* by kind permission.

E. V. L.

April 20, 1904



The Barbican, Lewes Castle.

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

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CHAPTER I

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MIDHURST

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The fitting order of a traveller's progress—The Downs the true Sussex—Fashion at bay—Mr. Kipling's topographical creed—Midhurst's advantages—Single railway lines—Queen Elizabeth at Cowdray—Montagus domestic and homicidal—The curse of Cowdray—Dr. Johnson at Midhurst—Cowdray Park.

If it is better, in exploring a county, to begin with its least interesting districts and to end with the best, I have made a mistake in the order of this book: I should rather have begun with the comparatively dull hot inland hilly region of the north-east, and have left it at the cool chalk Downs of the Hampshire border. But if one's first impression of new country cannot be too favourable we have done rightly in starting at Midhurst, even at the risk of a loss of enthusiasm in the concluding chapters. For although historically, socially, and architecturally north Sussex is as interesting as south Sussex, the crown of the county's scenery is the Downs, and its most fascinating districts are those which the Downs dominate. The farther we travel from the Downs and the sea the less unique are our surroundings. Many of the villages in the northern Weald, beautiful as they are, might equally well be in Kent or Surrey: a visitor suddenly alighting in their midst, say from a balloon, would be puzzled to name the county he was in; but the Downs and their dependencies are

essential Sussex. Hence a Sussex man in love with the Downs becomes less happy at every step northward.

THE INVIOLATE HILLS

One cause of the unique character of the Sussex Downs is their virginal security, their unassailable independence. They stand, a silent undiscovered country, between the seething pleasure towns of the seaboard plain and the trim estates of the Weald. Londoners, for whom Sussex has a special attraction by reason of its proximity (Brighton's beach is the nearest to the capital in point of time), either pause north of the Downs, or rush through them in trains, on bicycles, or in carriages, to the sea. Houses there are among the Downs, it is true, but they are old-established, the homes of families that can remember no other homes. There is as yet no fashion for residences in these altitudes. Until that fashion sets in (and may it be far distant) the Downs will remain essential Sussex, and those that love them will exclaim with Mr. Kipling,

> God gave all men all earth to love,
> But since man's heart is small,
> Ordains for each one spot shall prove
> Beloved over all.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Each to his choice, and I rejoice
> The lot has fallen to me
> In a fair ground—in a fair ground—
> Yea, Sussex by the sea!

MIDHURST

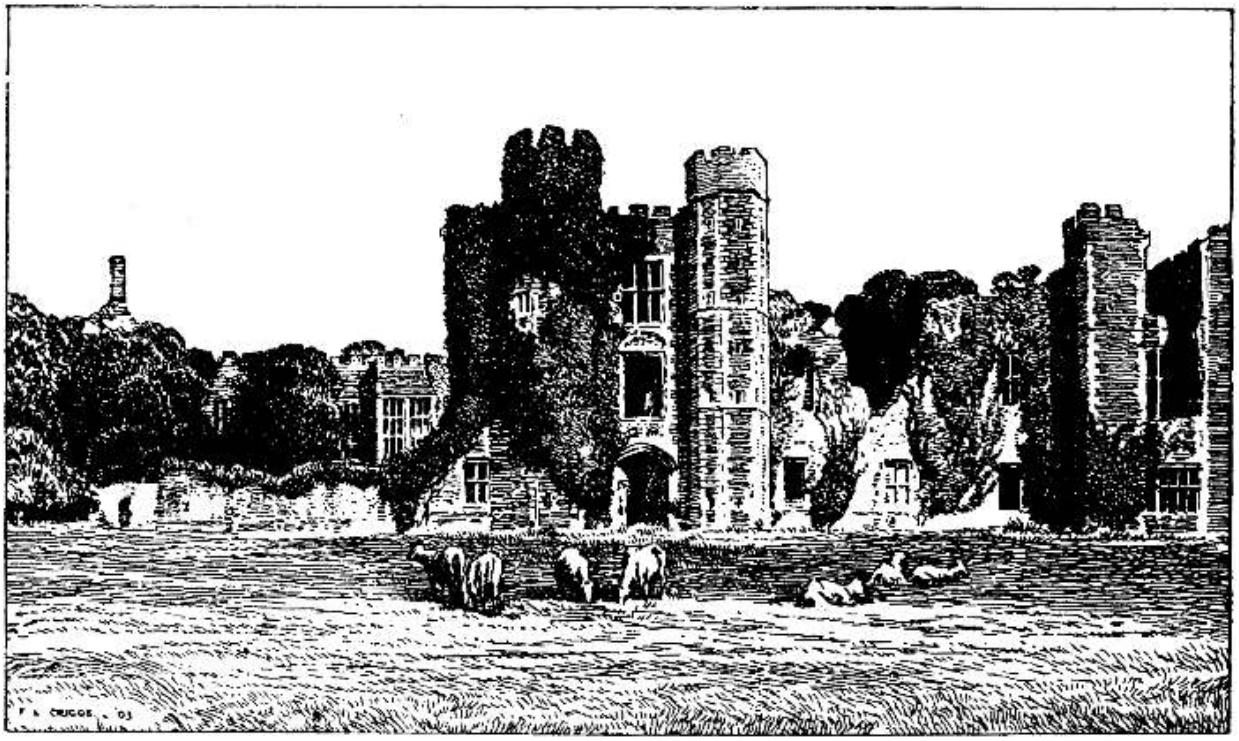
If we are to begin our travels in Sussex with the best, then Midhurst is the starting point, for no other spot has so much

to offer: a quiet country town, gabled and venerable, unmodernised and unambitious, with a river, a Tudor ruin, a park of deer, heather commons, immense woods, and the Downs only three miles distant. Moreover, Midhurst is also the centre of a very useful little railway system, which, having only a single line in each direction, while serving the traveller, never annoys him by disfiguring the country or letting loose upon it crowds of vandals. Single lines always mean thinly populated country. As a pedestrian poet has sung:—

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A single railway line;
> For then I know the wood and wold
> Are almost wholly mine.

And Midhurst being on no great high road is nearly always quiet. Nothing ever hurries there. The people live their own lives, passing along their few narrow streets and the one broad one, under the projecting eaves of timbered houses, unrecking of London and the world. Sussex has no more contented town.

The church, which belongs really to St. Mary Magdalen, but is popularly credited to St. Denis, was never very interesting, but is less so now that the Montagu tomb has been moved to Easebourne. Twenty years ago, I remember, an old house opposite the church was rumoured to harbour a pig-faced lady. I never had sight of her, but as to her existence and her cast of feature no one was in the least doubt. Pig-faced ladies (once so common) seem to have gone out, just as the day of Spring-heeled Jack is over. Sussex once had her Spring-heeled Jacks, too, in some profusion.



Cowdray.

ELIZABETH AT COWDRAY

Cowdray Park is gained from the High Street, just below the Angel Inn, by a causeway through water meadows of the Rother. The house is now but a shell, never having been rebuilt since the fire which ate out its heart in 1793: yet a beautiful shell, heavily draped in rich green ivy that before very long must here and there forget its earlier duty of supporting the walls and thrust them too far from the perpendicular to stand. Cowdray, built in the reign of Henry VIII., did not come to its full glory until Sir Anthony Browne, afterwards first Viscount Montagu, took possession. The seal was put upon its fame by the visit of Queen Elizabeth in 1591 (Edward VI. had been banqueted there by Sir Anthony in 1552, "marvellously, nay, rather excessively," as he wrote), as some return for the loyalty of her host, who, although an old man, in 1588, on the approach of the

Armada, had ridden straightway to Tilbury, with his sons and his grandson, the first to lay the service of his house at her Majesty's feet. A rare pamphlet is still preserved describing the festivities during Queen Elizabeth's sojourn. On Saturday, about eight o'clock, her Majesty reached the house, travelling from Farnham, where she had dined. Upon sight of her loud music sounded. It stopped when she set foot upon the bridge, and a real man, standing between two wooden dummies whom he exactly resembled, began to flatter her exceedingly. Until she came, he said, the walls shook and the roof tottered, but one glance from her eyes had steadied the turret for ever. He went on to call her virtue immortal and herself the Miracle of Time, Nature's Glory, Fortune's Empress, and the World's Wonder. Elizabeth, when he had made an end, took the key from him and embraced Lady Montagu and her daughter, the Lady Dormir; whereupon "the mistress of the house (as it were weeping in the bosome) said, 'O happie time! O joyfull daie!'"

A QUEEN'S DIVERSIONS

These preliminaries over, the fun began. At breakfast next morning three oxen and a hundred and forty geese were devoured. On Monday, August 17th, Elizabeth rode to her bower in the park, took a crossbow from a nymph who sang a sweet song, and with it shot "three or four" deer, carefully brought within range. After dinner, standing on one of the turrets she watched sixteen bucks "pulled down with greyhounds" in a lawn. On Tuesday, the Queen was approached by a pilgrim, who first called her "Fairest of all creatures," and expressed the wish that the world might end with her life and then led her to an oak whereon were hanging escutcheons of her Majesty and all the neighbouring noblemen and gentlemen. As she looked, a "wilde man" clad all in ivy appeared and delivered an address on the importance of loyalty. On Wednesday, the Queen was taken

to a goodlie fish-pond (now a meadow) where was an angler. After some words from him a band of fishermen approached, drawing their nets after them; whereupon the angler, turning to her Majesty, remarked that her virtue made envy blush and stand amazed. Having thus spoken, the net was drawn and found to be full of fish, which were laid at Elizabeth's feet. The entry for this day ends with the sentence, "That evening she hunted." On Thursday the lords and ladies dined at a table forty-eight yards long, and there was a country dance with tabor and pipe, which drew from her Majesty "gentle applause." On Friday, the Queen knighted six gentlemen and passed on to Chichester.

A DESPERADO POET

A year later the first Lord Montagu died. He was succeeded by another Anthony, the author of the "Book of Orders and Rules" for the use of the family at Cowdray, and the dedicatee of Anthony Copley's *Fig for Fortune*, 1596. Copley has a certain Sussex interest of his own, having astonished not a little the good people of Horsham. A contemporary letter describes him as "the most desperate youth that liveth. He did shoot at a gentleman last summer, and did kill an ox with a musket, and in Horsham church he threw his dagger at the parish clerk, and it stuck in a seat of the church. There liveth not his like in England for sudden attempts." Subsequently the conspirator-poet must have calmed down, for he states in the dedication to my lord that he is "now winnowed by the fan of grace and Zionry." To-day he would say "saved." Copley, after narrowly escaping capital punishment for his share in a Jesuit plot, disappeared.

The instructions given in Lord Montagu's "Booke of Orders and Rules" illustrate very vividly the generous amplitude of the old Cowdray establishment. Thus:—

MY CARVER AND HIS OFFICE.

I will that my carver, when he cometh to the ewerye boorde, doe there washe together with the Sewer, and that done be armed (videlt.) with an armeinge towell cast about his necke, and putt under his girdle on both sides, and one napkyn on his lefte shoulder, and an other on the same arme; and thence beinge broughte by my Gentleman Usher to my table, with two curteseyes thereto, the one about the middest of the chamber, the other when he cometh to ytt, that he doe stande seemely and decently with due reverence and sylence, untill my dyett and fare be brought uppe, and then doe his office; and when any meate is to be broken uppe that he doe carrye itt to a syde table, which shalbe prepared for that purpose and there doe ytt; when he hath taken upp the table, and delivered the voyder to the yeoman Usher, he shall doe reverence and returne to the ewrye boorde there to be unarmed. My will is that for that day he have the precedence and place next to my Gentleman Usher at the wayter's table.

MY GENTLEMEN WAYTERS.

I will that some of my Gentlemen Wayters harken when I or my wiffe att any tyme doe walke abroade, that they may be readye to give their attendance uppon us, some att one tyme and some att another as they shall agree amongst themselves; but when strangeres are in place, then I will that in any sorte they be readye to doe such service for them as the Gentleman Usher shall directe. I will further that they be dayly presente in the greate chamber or other place of my dyett about tenn of the clocke in the forenoone and five in the afternoone without fayle for performance of my service, unles they have license from my Stewarde or Gentleman Usher to the contrarye, which if they exceede, I will that they make knowne the cause thereof to my Stewarde, who shall acquaynte me therewithall. I will that they dyne and

> suppe att a table appoynted for them, and there take place nexte after the Gentlemen of my Horse and chamber, accordinge to their seniorityes in my service.

THE HOUSE OF MONTAGU

The third Viscount Montagu was not remarkable, but his account books are quaint reading. From July, 1657, to July, 1658, his steward spent £1,945 10*s.* solely in little personal matters for his master. Among the disbursements were, on September 11th, fourteen pence "for washing Will Stapler"; on November 22nd, 1*s.* 4*d.* to the Lewes carrier "for bringing a box of puddings for my mistress and my master"; on January 17th, £4 to "Mr. Fiske the dancing-master for teaching my master to dance, being two months"; and on April 21st, seven shillings "for a Tooth for my Lord."

The fifth Viscount was a man of violent temper. On reaching Mass one day and finding it half done, he drew his pistol and shot the chaplain. The outcry all over the country was loud and vengeful, and my lord lay concealed for fifteen years in a hiding-hole contrived in the masonry of Cowdray for the shelter of persecuted priests. The peer emerged only at night, when he roamed the close walks, repentant and sad. Lady Montagu would then steal out to him, dressing all in white to such good purpose that the desired rumours of a ghost soon flew about the neighbourhood.

The curse of Cowdray, which, if genuinely pronounced, has certainly been wonderfully fulfilled, dates from the gift of Battle Abbey by Henry VIII. to Sir Anthony Browne, the father of Queen Elizabeth's host and friend. Sir Anthony seized his new property, and turned the monks out of the gates, in 1538. Legend says that as the last monk departed, he warned his despoiler that by fire and water his line should perish. By fire and water it perished indeed. A week after Cowdray House was burned, in 1793, the last Viscount

Montagu was drowned in the Rhine. His only sister (the wife of Mr. Stephen Poyntz) who inherited, was the mother of two sons both of whom were drowned while bathing at Bognor. When Mr. Poyntz sold the estate to the Earl of Egmont, we may suppose the curse to have been withdrawn.

DR. JOHNSON AT COWDRAY

Among the treasures that were destroyed in the fire were the Roll of Battle Abbey and many paintings. Dr. Johnson visited Cowdray a few years before its demolition; "Sir," he said to Boswell, "I should like to stay here four-and-twenty hours. We see here how our ancestors lived." According to the *Tour of Great Britain*, attributed to Daniel Defoe, but probably by another hand, Cowdray's hall was of Irish oak. In the large parlour were the triumphs of Henry VIII. by Holbein. In the long gallery were the Twelve Apostles "as large as life"; while the marriage of Cupid and Psyche, a tableau that never failed to please our ancestors, was not wanting.

The glory of the Montagus has utterly passed. The present Earl of Egmont is either an absentee or he lives in a cottage near the gates; and the new house, which is hidden in trees, is of no interest. The park, however, is still ranged by its beautiful deer, and still possesses an avenue of chestnut trees and rolling wastes of turf. It is everywhere as free as a heath.

CHAPTER II

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MIDHURST'S VILLAGES

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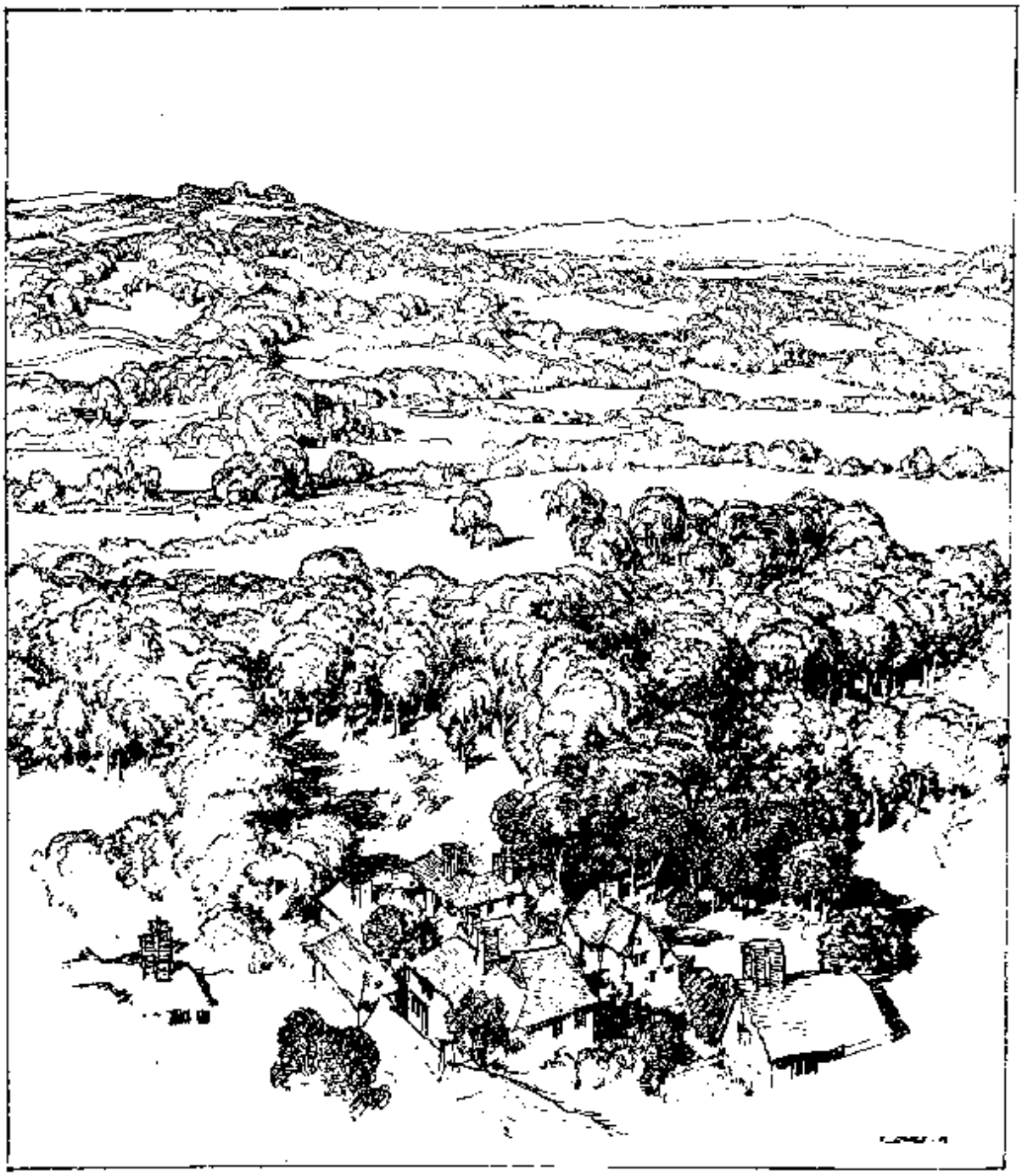
Hanging in chains—A wooded paradise—Fernhurst—Shulbrede Priory—Blackdown—Tennyson's Sussex home—Thomas Otway—Kate Hotspur's Grave—A Sussex ornithologist—The friend of owls—William Cobbett looks at the Squire—The charms of South Harting—Lady Mary Caryll's little difficulties—Gilbert White in Sussex—The old field routine—Witchcraft at South Harting—The Rother—Easebourne—West Lavington and Cardinal Manning.

The road from Midhurst to Blackdown ascends steadily to Henley, threading vast woods and preserves. On the left is a great common, on the right North Heath, where the two Drewitts were hanged in chains after being executed at Horsham, in 1799, for the robbery of the Portsmouth mail—probably the last instance of hanging in chains in this country. For those that like wild forest country there was once no better ramble than might be enjoyed here; but now (1903) that the King's new sanatorium is being built in the midst of Great Common, some of the wildness must necessarily be lost. A finer site could not have been found. Above Great Common is a superb open space nearly six hundred feet high, with gorse bushes advantageously placed to give shelter while one studies the Fernhurst valley, the Haslemere heights and, blue in the distance, the North

Downs. Sussex has nothing wilder or richer than the country we are now in.

A few minutes' walk to the east from this lofty common, and we are immediately above Henley, clinging to the hill side, an almost Alpine hamlet. Henley, however, no longer sees the travellers that once it did, for the coach road, which of old climbed perilously through it, has been diverted in a curve through the hanger, and now sweeps into Fernhurst by way of Henley Common.



Blackdown.

FERNHURST

Fernhurst, beautifully named, is in an exquisite situation among the minor eminences of the Haslemere range, but the builder has been busy here, and the village is not what it was.

SHULBREDE PRIORY

Two miles to the north-west, on the way to Linchmere, immediately under the green heights of Marley, is the old house which once was Shulbrede Priory. As it is now in private occupation and is not shown to strangers, I have not seen it; but of old many persons journeyed thither, attracted by the quaint mural paintings, in the Prior's room, of domestic animals uttering speech. "Christus natus est," crows the cock. "Quando? Quando?" the duck inquires. "In hac nocte," says the raven. "Ubi? Ubi?" asks the cow, and the lamb satisfies her: "Bethlehem, Bethlehem."

One may return deviously from Shulbrede to Midhurst (passing in the heart of an unpopulated country a hamlet called Milland, where is an old curiosity shop of varied resources) by way of one of the pleasantest and narrowest lanes that I know, rising and falling for miles through silent woods, coming at last to Chithurst church, one of the smallest and simplest and least accessible in the county, and reaching Midhurst again by the hard, dry and irreproachable road that runs between the heather of Trotton Common.

On the eastern side of Fernhurst, to which we may now return, a mile on the way to Lurgashall, was once Verdley Castle; but it is now a castle no more, merely a ruined heap. Utilitarianism was too much for it, and its stones fell to Macadam. After all, if an old castle has to go, there are few better forms of reincarnation for it than a good hard road.

While at Fernhurst it is well to walk on to Blackdown, the best way, perhaps, being to take the lane to the right about half a mile beyond the village, and make for the hill across country. Blackdown, whose blackness is from its heather and its firs, frowns before one all the while. The climb to the summit is toilsome, over nine hundred feet, but well worth the effort, for the hill overlooks hundreds of square miles of Sussex and Surrey, between Leith Hill in the north and Chanctonbury in the south.

TENNYSON'S SUSSEX HOME

Aldworth, Tennyson's house, is on the north-east slope, facing Surrey. The poet laid the foundation stone on April 23 (Shakespeare's birthday), 1868: the inscription on the stone running "Prosper thou the work of our hands, O prosper thou our handiwork." Of the site Aubrey de Vere wrote:—"It lifted England's great poet to a height from which he could gaze on a large portion of that English land which he loved so well, see it basking in its most affluent summer beauty, and only bounded by 'the inviolate sea.' Year after year he trod its two stately terraces with men the most noted of their time." Pilgrims from all parts journeyed thither—not too welcome; among them that devout American who had worked his way across the Atlantic in order to recite *Maud* to its author: a recitation from which, says the present Lord Tennyson, his father "suffered." Tennyson has, I think, no poems upon his Sussex home, but I always imagine that the dedication of *The Death of Œnone and other Poems*, in 1894, must belong to Blackdown:—

> There on the top of the down,
> The wild heather round me and over me June's high blue,
> When I look'd at the bracken so bright and the heather so brown,

I thought to myself I would offer this book to you,
This, and my love together,
To you that are seventy-seven,
With a faith as clear as the heights of the June-blue heaven,
And a fancy as summer-new
As the green of the bracken amid the gloom of the heather.

The most interesting village between Midhurst and the western boundary, due west, is Trotton, three miles distant on the superb road to Petersfield, of which I have spoken above. There is no better road in England. Trotton is quiet and modest, but it has two great claims on lovers of the English drama. In the "Ode to Pity" of one of our Sussex poets we read thus of another:—

But wherefore need I wander wide
To old Ilissus' distant side,
  Deserted streams and mute?
Wild Arun, too, has heard thy strains,
And echo, 'midst my native plains,
  Been soothed by pity's lute.

There first the wren thy myrtles shed
On gentlest Otway's infant head,
  To him thy cell was shown;
And while he sung the female heart,
With youth's soft notes unspoiled by art,
  Thy turtles mixed their own.

THOMAS OTWAY

So wrote William Collins, adding in a note that the Arun (more properly the Rother, a tributary of the Arun) runs by the village of Trotton, in Sussex, where Thomas Otway had his birth. The unhappy author of *Venice Preserv'd* and *The*

Orphan was born at Trotton in 1652, the son of Humphrey Otway, the curate, who afterwards became rector of Woolbeding close by. Otway died miserably when only thirty-three, partly of starvation, partly of a broken heart at the unresponsiveness of Mrs. Barry, the actress, whom he loved, but who preferred the Earl of Rochester. His two best plays, although they are no longer acted, lived for many years, providing in Belvidera, in *Venice Preserv'd* and Monimia, in *The Orphan* (in which he "sung the female heart") congenial *rôles* for tragic actresses—Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Siddons and Miss O'Neill. Otway was buried in the churchyard of St. Clement Danes, but a tablet to his fame is in Trotton church, which is of unusual plainness, not unlike an ecclesiastical barn. Here also is the earliest known brass to a woman—Margaret de Camoys, who lived about 1300.

HOTSPUR'S LADY

The transition is easy (at Trotton) from Otway to Shakespeare, from *Venice Preserv'd* to *Henry IV.*

> HOTSPUR (to LADY PERCY). Come, Kate, thou art perfect in lying down: come quick, quick; that I may lay my head in thy lap.
>
> *Lady P.* Go, ye giddy goose.
>
> [*The music plays.*
>
> *Hot.* Now I perceive, the devil understands Welsh;
> And 't is no marvel' he's so humorous,
> By'r lady, he's a good musician.
>
> *Lady P.* Then should you be nothing but musical; for you are altogether governed by humours. Lie still, ye thief, and hear the lady sing in Welsh.

Hot. I had rather hear Lady, my brach, howl in Irish.

Lady P. Wouldst have thy head broken?

Hot. No.

Lady P. Then be still.

Hot. Neither: 'tis a woman's fault.

Lady P. Now God help thee!

Hot. To the Welsh lady's bed.

Lady P. What's that?

Hot. Peace! she sings.

[*A Welsh song sung by* LADY MORTIMER.

Hot. Come, Kate, I'll have your song too.

Lady P. Not mine, in good sooth.

Hot. Not yours, in good sooth! 'Heart, you swear like a comfit-maker's wife. 'Not you, in good sooth'; and, 'As true as I live'; and,

> 'As God shall mend me'; and, 'As sure as day':
> And giv'st such sarcenet surety for thy oaths,
> As if thou never walk'dst further than Finsbury.
> Swear me, Kate, like a lady as thou art,
> A good mouth-filling oath; and leave 'in sooth,'
> And such protest of pepper-gingerbread,
> To velvet-guards and Sunday-citizens.
> Come, sing.

Lady P. I will not sing.

Hot. 'Tis the next way to turn tailor, or be redbreast teacher. An the indentures be drawn, I'll away within