VIEWS

OF

The Seats

OF

NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN,

IN

England, Wales, Scotland,

AND

Ireland.

BY J. P. NEALE.

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1823.

Ampthill Park, Bedfordshire;

THE SEAT OF

HENRY RICHARD VASSALL FOX,

LORD HOLLAND.

In the early periods of English history, this rich and fertile domain, in the very centre of the County of Bedford, was held by the Baronial family of Poinz. Nicholas Poinz, and Joan, his wife, the third year of the reign of Henry III., obtained the King's licence for a market, every Tuesday, at their Manor of Ampthill. The Estate is situated in Redbourne Stoke Hundred, and is about a quarter of a mile from the east end of the market town, occupying a beautiful valley.

Sir John Cornwall, Lord Fanhope, K.G., who married Elizabeth of Lancaster, Duchess of Exeter, sister to King Henry IV., held the several Manors of Ampthill, Milbrooke, Houghton, Tingreth, Flitwick, and Pelling, all by the King's gift. He built a large House on this Estate, which, reverting to the crown, was granted by Edward IV. to Edmund, Lord Grey, of Ruthin, afterwards created Earl of Kent. His grandson, Richard, third Earl of Kent, having much wasted his Estate, this Mansion was made over to Henry VIII., whose Palace it then became. In the thirty-third year of his reign he erected the Manor into "The Honor of Ampthill," and in Leland's description, it is denominated the "Castelle" of Ampthill, in which Castle, Queen Catharine of Arragon resided during the time her divorce was in agitation, before Commissioners at Dunstable. She removed from hence to Kimbolton, where she died in 1536. There exists a plan of this Castle, which Queen Catharine inhabited, taken about the year 1619, soon after which it must have been pulled down.

King Charles II., in 1661, granted the whole to John Ashburnham, Esq., who was created Lord Ashburnham in 1698. He built the present Mansion, which has all the stately characteristics of that magnificent period; every part is lofty, and imposing: it consists of two stories, surmounted by a high roof, and has wings containing the offices. The House and Estate were sold, about 1720, to Richard Viscount Fitzwilliam, of whom it was purchased, in 1736, by Anne, Lady Gowran, the grandmother of the late Earl of Upper Ossory.

The Mansion, after it came into the possession of the Earl of Upper Ossory, underwent alterations, which were adopted with classical taste: the building of red brick is now cased with a composition resembling stone, having treillage on the basement story. In the tympanum of

the pediment, on the principal front, is the arms of Fitz Patrick, *viz.* a saltier and chief, the latter charged with three fleurs de lis, impaling, fretty, on a chief, three leopards' faces, for Liddell, supported by two lions, crowned and collared, with an Earl's coronet surmounting the whole. The entrance is by an ascent of two flights of steps, and over the door is a bust. On a pedestal in front of the House, is a large figure of the celebrated dog of Alcibiades. At a short distance from this front the view, in the annexed engraving, was taken.

The various Apartments contain some fine pictures and ancient marbles, besides a Library and Cabinet of Natural History.

In the pediment of the Garden front, within an oval, is the figure of Agrippina, weeping. The Gardens beautifully diversified, command views of many of the remarkable scenes in the Grounds, from which they are separated by a ha! ha! fence. In 1819 a beautiful poem descriptive of the scenery, was published under the title of "Ampthill Park," by Henry Luttrell, Esq.

On an eminence, the site of the ancient Castle, there now stands a Cross, erected at the instigation of the Earl of Orford. The Cross was designed by Essex, it is octagonal, and upon three steps, bearing at the intersection the arms of France and England quarterly, impaling Castile and Leon quarterly. On the south side of the base is inscribed "Johannes Fitz Patrick, Comes de Upper Ossory, posuit 1773," and on the north side,

"In days of old here Ampthill's Towers were seen,
The mournful refuge of an injured Queen;
Here flowed her pure, but unavailing tears,
Here blinded zeal sustained her sinking years;
Yet freedom hence her radiant banners waved,
And love aveng'd a realm by priests enslav'd,
From Catharine's wrongs a nation's bliss was spread,
And Luther's light from Henry's lawless bed." H. W.

The Grounds abound with fine old standard trees, and large plantations, and were enlarged by the addition of the demesne of Houghton, by exchange with the Duke of Bedford, for Lidlington, which is about three miles distant.

The Old House at Houghton forms a fine picturesque ruin. It was built by Mary, daughter of Sir Henry Sydney, K.G., wife of the second Earl of Pembroke, and was granted, at the Restoration, to Robert, Lord Bruce, who was created Viscount Bruce, of Ampthill, and Earl of Aylesbury, in 1664; he was also made High Steward of the Honor of Ampthill. At the entrance of the Park, from the Town, was a Lodge, in which Sir Philip Sydney is reported to have composed part of his Arcadia. Pomfret, also, who was born at Luton, is said to have written many of his poems on this spot. At the death of the Earl of Upper Ossory, 1st February, 1818, æt. 72, this Estate was left to Lord Holland, whose mother, Lady Mary Fitz Patrick, was the late Earl's sister.