



*GIFFORD'S HALL: KING JOHN'S BANQUETING HALL.*

a later type of house than we have at the moment in view, though it indicates the permanence of plan. The mediæval hall was nearly always upon the ground floor, though sometimes raised upon a lower sunken storey, and it was usually the loftiest building of the dwelling-place. It was also the largest, being intended both for the accommodation of the household and for the transaction of business; for the manor house, which was a castle upon a smaller scale, became the centre of life in the village, and the manor courts were held in the hall.

Here the lord or his steward received homage and held the court baron, and the court leet, with the view of frankpledge and the tourn, and enrolled the villagers in the tithing.

The hall in those early times was substantially built, and, if its roof was of too great a span, it was divided by a line of pillars, and sometimes assumed almost the dimensions of a church, with nave and aisles. Of this early construction the halls at Oakham and Winchester are fine examples. There is much reason to believe that for a century or more after the Conquest