

nearly a century ago by General Edward Leyborne-Popham, who had married the heiress of the Pophams of Littlecote and taken the name, do not in any way break the antique spell.

Before Littlecote came to the hands of the Pophams, it had long been the seat of the Darells, of whom William was Sub-Treasurer of England and Sheriff of Wilts, *temp.* Richard II. Here lived, in the sixteenth century, another William Darell, the last of the line of the builders of Littlecote, whose stormy career is still recounted by the neighbouring peasants, when they tell of "Wild Darell," whose mad course links him, we think, by strange association, with the "wild huntsman"

performed her duties to a lady, whom tradition avers to have been masked. Scarcely had the new-born infant been thus strangely ushered into the great world, when a man of ferocious aspect entered, and, without more ado, extinguished its new-budded life by brutally flinging it on the back of a great fire which roared on the hearth. Its body rolled on one side from the burning logs, but once again, amid the shrieks of the mother and the cries of the woman, he threw it upon the flames.

Then instantly the midwife, again blindfolded, was mounted on the pillion, and, hurriedly riding in the breaking day with her silent



THE CHAPEL.

of earlier tradition. The story of Darell's alleged crime has been told by many writers, including old Aubrey, Sir Walter Scott, and Macaulay. One dark and stormy night a hasty messenger, they say, arrived on horseback at the cottage of a Berkshire midwife, demanding her instant services for a lady. Plenteous was the reward offered, but the strange condition was attached that the old woman should be blindfolded, and be carried on the horseman's pillion to the scene of her duties. Her scruples were overcome, and the pair set forth through the night, until they reached a lonely mansion. There the midwife, still blindfolded, was conducted to an upper room, where she

companion, was put within her own doors. But the strangeness of the summons had aroused her curiosity, and, on reaching the house, she had counted the steps as she ascended, and, moreover, had cut a piece out of the lady's bed-curtain. Thus ultimately was the horrid deed brought home to its cruel author, and plain and palpable, say the country-folk, was the proof of his guilt. Yet Darell escaped the penalty. Old Aubrey—garrulous, gossiping Aubrey—averts that a dark transaction wrought his freedom. "The knight was brought to his tryall; and, to be short, this judge had his noble house, parke, and mannor, and (I thinke) more, for a bribe to save his life."