

LITTLE MORETON HALL, CHESHIRE.

LITTLE MORETON HALL—or, as it is sometimes called, Moreton Old Hall—stands between Congleton and Newcastle-under-Lyme, and is one of the most remarkable houses of its historic class. Some excellent judges have, indeed, declared it to be the finest of all our English timber-framed houses of the sixteenth century. These pages illustrate many beautiful antique dwelling-places of the same character of construction, and among them Bramall, which stands upon the same level, though Moreton may probably be regarded as *primus inter pares*. Its distinguishing merits as a structure are its great variety and boldness of design, the solidity of its oaken framing, internally and externally, and the richness and elaboration of its detail. Moreover, and some may think most of all, it bears the visible marks of those who dwelt in it, of those who were concerned in the building of it, and of those who were hospitably entertained within its walls. It is

thus a supremely interesting embodiment of the domestic life of old England. Distinction did not light upon any one of its possessors. Not one of them, that we know of, was famous at court or in the field; but each of them lived the life of a country gentleman, sharing the occupations and the tastes of his neighbours and sometimes holding high rivalry with them.

The Moretons have lived here and hereabout from a time to which the knowledge of man runneth not to the contrary. At least to the Conquest we can trace them, for one Gralam de Lostock, in the time of Henry III., was fourth in descent from a certain Hugh de Runchamp, who was then the grantee. The singular Christian name of Gralam appears more than once on the family tree. The grandson of the possessor so designated was another Gralam, but, by his time, as the manner was, the surname, which beforetime had been of no fixed character, had been changed, and was established as Moreton. To Gralam de



THE ENTRANCE FROM THE BRIDGE.