SAMLESBURY HALL,

LANCASHIRE.

THE wreck of Samlesbury, once among the greatest and finest of the Lancashire timbered halls, lies on the high road between Blackburn and Preston, and looks up to the venerable front of Hoghton Tower. This position fitted it for a public-house, after which its strange fortune changed it into a "school for young ladies," so that gradually its original character became more and more lost, and, of its rooms, the hall alone is worthy of present illustration. Yet the Samlesbury heiress brought it in marriage to Sir Gilbert de Southworth in the fourteenth century, and they and their descendants occupied and extended and embellished it for more than three hundred years. The house was certainly standing in the fourteenth century, and already it had a domestic chapel, where Thomas Southworth and his wife Johann had licence for Divine worship to be celebrated. By the time of Henry VIII. the south, or weather front, beaten by the wind and rain of 200 years, called for repair, and Sir John Southworth, whose name with the date 1532 is in the carving, rebuilt it with the thin bricks in use at that time. He also repaired the great hall, whose noble roof is clearly of much earlier date, and added much elaborate woodwork, as of the interesting and unusual screen and gallery, which, though it has been badly tampered with, and Jacobean and other later work appears in panels, belongs in substance to his time, and bears his name amid its essentially Gothic work.

Sir Thomas Southworth, the builder of the more modern and yet now ancient part of Samlesbury Hall, married the daughter of Sir Thomas Butler of Bewsey, and his son Sir John was a man of knightly and military qualities, who saw service against the Scots. He was commended to the Earl of Shrewsbury by the Lords Eure and Wharton in these words: "He says he is a young man, and desirous to know



PART OF THE NORTH FRONT.



THE HALL.

service in war, and, as we think him to be commended therein, being a toward and tall gentleman, we require your lordship to favour this his honest suit." Events which might have been tragic occurred in the household of Samlesbury in 1612, when Jane, daughter of Sir Richard Sherburne of Stoneyhurst, and wife of John Southworth, was tried for witchcraft, in causing the body of a certain girl to waste and consume. It is recorded that Sir John Southworth thought his daughter-in-law an "evil woman and a witch," saying that "he liked her not, and that he doubted she would bewitch him."

Samlesbury was sadly ill-treated, long after the Southworths had disappeared, when early in the eighteenth century it was converted into an inn, and a "really mediæval" effect was demanded by that falsely romantic and ignorantly destructive age. "A minstrel gallery was added in the wrong place. Not merely was this barbarism perpetrated, but the magnificent mediæval oak screen was chopped up to form the gallery front mingled with portions of old Jacobean bedsteads and other furniture, making altogether a most incongruous medley." The Perpendicular panelling was—and in parts still is—extremely fine, and the main work is adorned with grotesque figures supporting a simply but boldly carved beam. Later on Samlesbury came into the hands of the late Mr. J. Harrison, himself an archæologist, who added a wing, and further enriched the place, though, according to Mr. Taylor, not with perfect understanding of details. Nevertheless, it was Mr. Harrison who recovered the place from much decay, and to his care a great deal is due. It is still owned by his family, but is occupied by Mr. Frederick Baynes, who preserves what remains with care and judgment.



WEST END OF THE ANCIENT HALL.