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VNiVERSITAS  
STVDII  
SALAMANIINI

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THE  
HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES  
OF  
CLAYBROOK

IN  
The COUNTY of LEICESTER;  
INCLUDING  
The HAMLETS OF BITTESBY, ULLESTHORPE,  
WIBTOFT, and LITTLE WIGSTON.

By the Rev. A. MACAULAY, M.A.

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR, by J. NICHOLS;

And sold by CHARLES DILLY, in the Poultry; J. GREGORY, and

ANNE IRELAND, Leicester: W. ADAMS, Loughborough;

W. WARD, Hinkckley; and T. DICEY and Co. Northampton

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The dialect of the common people, though broad, is sufficiently plain and intelligible. They have a strong propensity to aspirate their words; the letter *H* comes in almost on every occasion where it ought not, and is as frequently omitted where it ought to come in. The words *fine*, *mine*, and such like, are pronounced as if they were spelt *foine*, *moine*; *place*, *face* &c. as if they were spelt *pleace*, *feace*; and in the plural sometimes, you hear *placean*; *closean*, for *closes*; and many other words in the same style of Saxon termination. The words *there* and *where* are generally pronounced thus, *theree*, *wheree*; the words *mercy*, *deserve*, &c. thus, *marcy*, *desarve*. The following peculiarities of pronunciation

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are likewise, observable; *uz*, strongly aspirated, for *us*, *war* for *was*, *meed* for *maid*, *faither* for *father*, *e'ery* for *every*, *brig* for *bridge*, *thurrough* for *furrow*, *hawf* for *half*, *cart-rit* for *rut*, *malefactory* for *manufactory*, *inactious* for *anxious*. The words *mysen* and *himsen* are sometimes used instead of *myself* and *himself*; the word *Shack* is used to denote an idle, worthless vagabond; and the word *Rip*, one who is very profane. The following are instances of provincialism where the words are entirely different. *Butty*, a fellow servant or labourer; thus it is said, "One butty's wi' t'other." To *crack*, to boast. *Fog*, dead grass. *Frem*, plump or thriving; thus they say, "a Frem child," "frem grafs;" and *Framland* is the name of one of the hundreds of the county. *Gorse*, or *Goss*, furze. *Living*, farm; *Passer*, gimlet. *Peert*, lively and well. *Ruck*, a confused heap. *Sough*, a covered drain. *Spinney*, a small plantation. *Strike*, bushel. *Whit-tawer*, a collar-maker. *Town*, a village. *House* for *kitchen*. *Unked*, lonely and uncomfortable. The following phrases are common; "a power of people;" "a hantle of money;" "I don't know, I'm sure;" "I can't awhile as yet as." The words *like* and *such* frequently occur as expletives in conversation. For example: "If you don't give me my price *like*, I won't stay here hagling all day and *such*." The monosyllable *as* is generally substituted for *that*; for instance, "the last time *as* I called." "I reckon *as* I an't one." I imagine that I am not singular. It is common to stigmatize Public characters, by saying that they "set poor

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lights;" and to express surprise, by saying, "Dear heart alive!" The substantive *Right* generally usurps the place of *ought*; for instance, "Farmer A. has a *right* to pay his tax." "The assessor has a just *right* to give him a receipt." "Next ways," and "clever through," are in common use: Thus, "I shall go next ways clever through Ullesthorpe." *Nigh-hand*, for probably, as "he'll nigh-hand call on us." *Duable*, convenient or proper: Thus, "the church is not served at *duable* hours, " It is not uncommon for the wives of farmers

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to style their husbands *Our Master*, and for the husbands to call their wives *Mamy*; and a labourer will often distinguish his wife by calling her, *the O'man*. There are many old people now living, who well remember the time when "Goody" and "Dame," "Gaffer" and "Gammer," were in vogue among the peasantry of Leicestershire; but they are now almost universally discarded and supplanted by *Mr.* and *Mrs.* which are indiscriminately applied to all ranks, from the esquire and his lady down to Mr. and Mrs. Pauper, who flaunt in rags, and drink tea twice a day.

A custom formerly prevailed in this parish and neighbourhood of "riding for the bride-cake," which took place when the bride was brought home to her new habitation. A pole was erected in the front of the house, 3 or 4 yards high, with the cake stuck upon the top of it; on the instant that the bride set out from her old habitation, a company of young men started off on horseback; and he who was fortunate enough to reach the pole first, and knock the cake down with his stick, had the honour of receiving it from the hand of a damsel on the point of a wooden sword; and with this trophy he returned in triumph to meet the bride and her attendant, who, upon their arrival in the village, were met by a party, whose office it was to adorn their horse heads with garlands, and to present the bride with a posey. The last ceremony of this sort that took place in the parish of Claybrook was between 60 and 70 years ago, and was witnessed by a person now living in the parish. Sometime the bride-cake was tried for by persons on foot, and then it was called "throwing the quintal," which was performed with heavy bars of iron; thus affording a trial of muscular strength, as well as of gallantry.

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This custom has been long discontinued, as well as the other. The only custom now remaining at weddings, that tend to recall a classical image to the mind, is that of sending to a disappointed lover a garland, made

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of willow variously ornamented, accompanied sometimes with a pair of gloves, a white handkerchief, and a smelling bottle.

At the funeral of a yeoman or farmer, the clergyman generally leads the van in the procession, in his canonical habiliments; and the relations follow the corpse, two and two of each sex, in the order of proximity, linked in each other's arms. At the funeral of a young man, it is customary to have six young women, clad in white, as pall-bearers; and the same number of young men, with white gloves and hatbands, at the funeral of a young woman. But these usages are not so universally prevalent as they were in the days of our fathers; and in the days of our "wiser sons," they may become almost as obsolete as "throwing the quintal."

Old John Payne and his wife, natives of this parish, are well known from having perambulated the hundred of Guthlaxton many years, during the season of Christmas, with a fine gew-gaw which they call a *wassail*, and which they exhibit from house to house, with the accompaniment of a duet. I apprehend that the practice of wassailing will die with this aged pair. We are by no means so tenacious of old usages and diversions in this country, as they are in many other parts of the world.