



Built in 1772 by Mr. George Clive and so called in compliment to Lord Clive's Claremont, the house was further adorned for Sir John Dick from designs by P. Columbani in 1780

ADJOINING the north-east corner of Richmond Park, which it overlooks, Mount Clare is still a delightful country house with its own meadows and home farm where hay is cut and cows are milked barely seven miles from Hyde Park Corner. Priory Lane, part of the "Lanes" originally called Clarence Lanes, connecting Barnes with Richmond Park, and from which a stately chestnut avenue leads up to the house, serves numerous agreeable eighteenth century residences of slighter pretensions; and a

little farther eastward Roehampton Lane, winding to what was originally the hamlet of that name lying between Putney Heath and Putney Park, gives access to the early eighteenth century Roehampton House, designed by Thomas Archer, now the permanent home for War-disabled soldiers, and Manresa, formerly Bessborough House, designed by Sir William Chambers, the grounds of which adjoin Mount Clare to the east. Between the two lanes, and immediately north of Mount Clare, are the grounds of Grove House, built by Sir Joshua Vanneck, father of the first Lord Huntingfield, on the site of the mansion house of Putney, *alias* Mortlake Park, that in the seventeenth century occupied the area between Roehampton, Barnes, and Sheen.

Originally the whole tract of country from Richmond westwards to Putney ferry and Wimbledon and southwards to Combe Woods was a chase, partly common land, partly heath and bracken, and partly private property. The Tudor sovereigns, and particularly Charles I, were much at Richmond Palace, and the latter king, against the counsel of his advisers, enclosed out of the chase the present Richmond Great Park with a brick wall. At the east end of the chase was the great Tudor mansion of Wimbledon Park, built by Lord Burleigh and subsequently acquired by Queen Henrietta Maria, to which Putney Park on the other side of the Portsmouth Road was attached for sporting purposes. Before and during the Commonwealth, Putney Park was the property of the sagacious Christian (Bruce), Countess of Devonshire. Thomas Hobbes, the author of *Leviathan*, lived there as tutor to her son; and Waller, Donne, and the Earl of Pembroke were among her frequent visitors.

After the enclosure of Richmond Park, but more particularly after the sale of Putney by the Cavendishes in 1679 and the demolition of Wimbledon by Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, early in the eighteenth century (though there have been two successive buildings erected on its site adjoining Wimbledon Church), what we know as residential Roehampton and Putney gradually became a





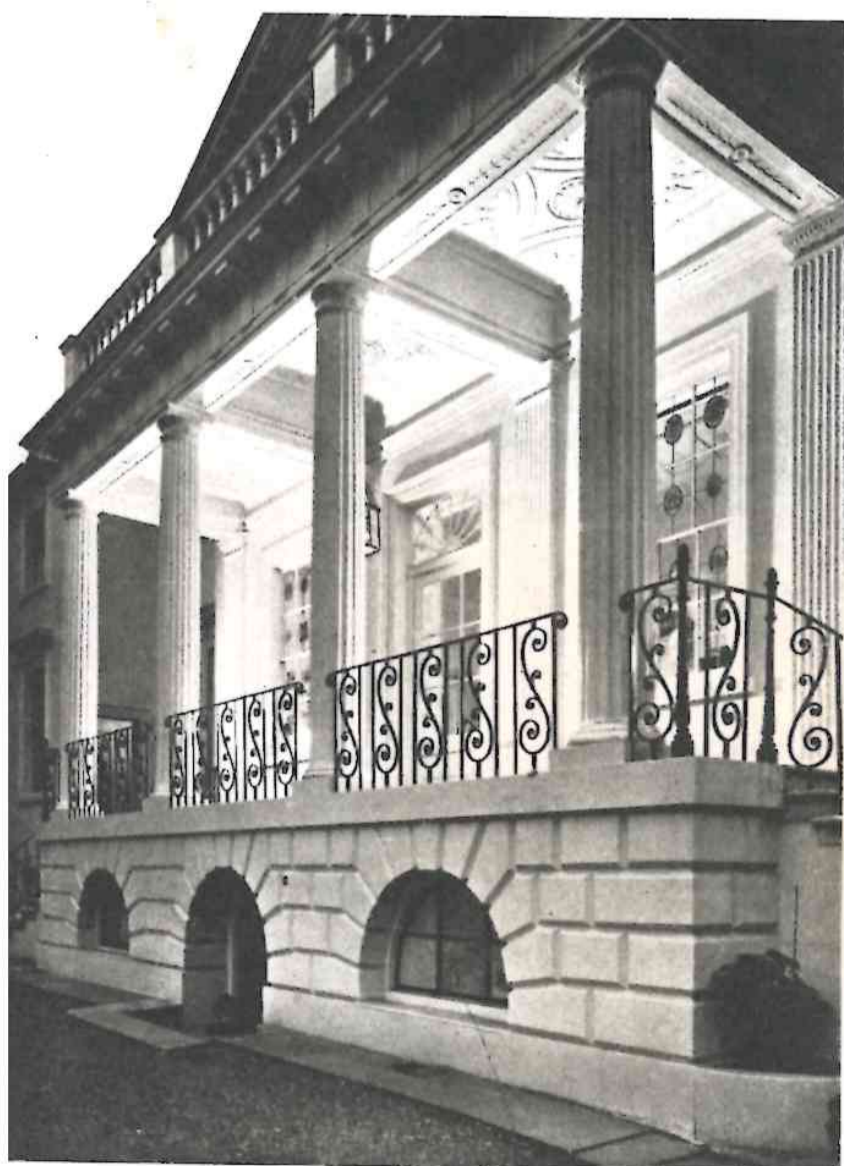
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2.—THE ENTRANCE FRONT

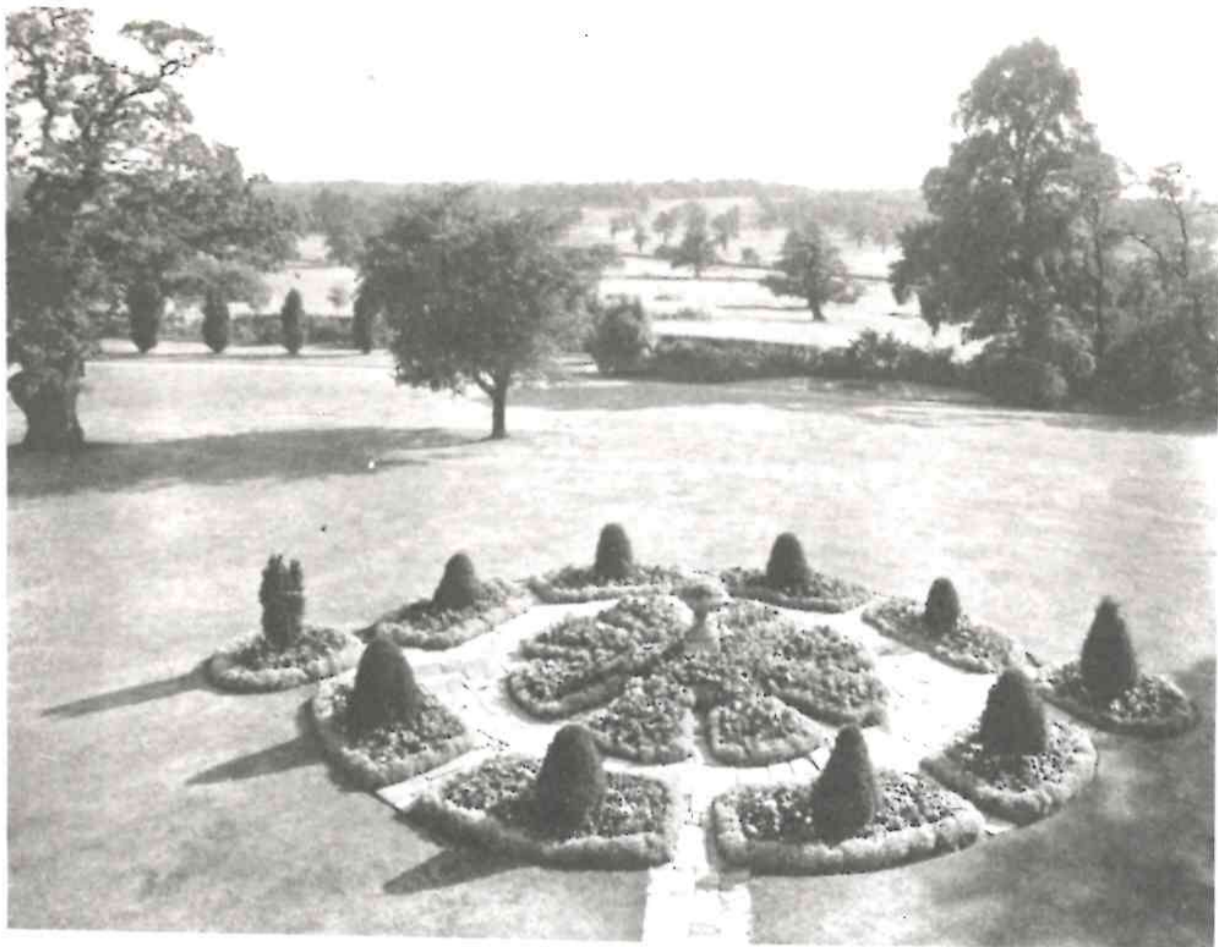
"COUNTRY LIFE."

The building of Putney Bridge in 1729 by thirty subscribers, in place of the previous ferry, must have considerably enhanced its value, and the rights of access to Richmond Park obtained in 1758—including the gate at the end of Priory Lane which certain Mr. Brown only consented to erect for the use of Princess Amelia, the then Ranger, in exchange for an annual supply of venison—added further to its attractions. In 1770 George Clive acquired 35 acres of what had, presumably, been Putney Park, between Vanneck's Grove House and the Richmond Park wall. He had even then to pay £300 an acre for it on account of what is described in Watts' *Times* as its extra-

ordinarily happy situation. But Clarence Lane was so rough and deep, and the surface so muddy, that the Clives used to vacate the house in October and go to London for the winter, because communication with the outside world was so difficult to maintain. The Lane was a private road, and continued in execrable condition until a few years ago—when it was handed over to the local authorities by the present owner of Mount Clare. Previously to that the local authorities had called that part of Clarence Lane which stretched from Barnes Common to Richmond Park Priory Lane, and that part leading up from Priory Lane to Roehampton retained its name of Clarence Lane.



3.—IRON AND PLASTERWORK IN THE PORCHES



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5.—THE VIEW OVER RICHMOND PARK

"C.L."



6—THE GARDEN FRONT, LOOKING ALONG THE ADDED WING



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7. THE FARM COTTAGES

"COUNTRY LIFE"

At about the same time as Mr. Clive's purchase of the Mount Clare property, other portions of Putney Park were sold. What is called Clarence Lane was formed, joining Priory and Roehampton Lanes, and in it the Duke of Clarence subsequently inhabited Clarence House, and Mr. Temple built Templeton; the Priory was built by Mr. Knight Bruce, Downshire House by Lord Downshire, and the present Manresa House, now a Jesuit college, by Lord Bessborough. The same process was going on beyond Roehampton on Putney Heath, from the brow of which "a most beautiful prospect over the Thames and Middlesex from Harrow to Hampstead" was gained. William Pitt subsequently died in Bowling Green House on Putney Heath, and James Macpherson of *Ossian* lived in another. An obelisk, visible (or till lately so) over a garden fence where building is now taking place on the edge of Putney Heath, commemorates the building there of a fireproof house in 1776 by a Mr. David Hartley. Lysons records that "many spectators remained with perfect confidence and security in the room over that in which the fire was burning with great rapidity." Incidentally, near by the obelisk stood the last of the chain of "telegraphs" that connected London with Portsmouth.

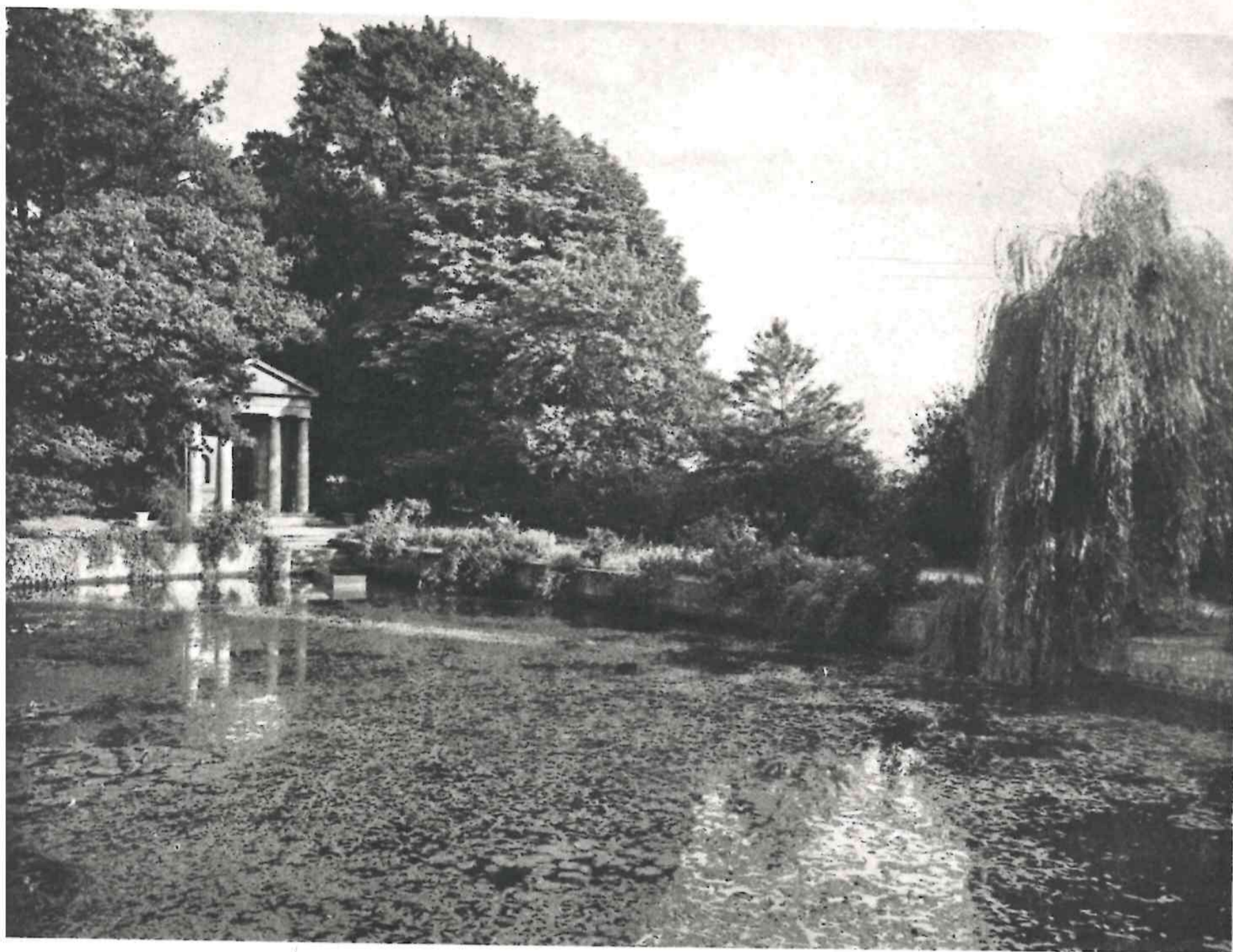
The whole region is so packed with interest that in tracing some of these major red herrings we have strayed a little way from Mr. Clive and Mount Clare. He was the grandson, by Benjamin Clive, of Robert Clive of Styche, and as such was first cousin to the great Lord Clive. The latter had purchased the Duke of Newcastle's Vanbrughian Claremont, near by at Esher, soon after 1760, and built it anew in its present form from designs by Henry Holland under the aegis of "Capability" Brown. George Clive was M.P. for Bishops Castle, and had previously resided at Bath. He married Sydney, daughter and heiress of Thomas Bolton of Knock, Co. Louth, and is ancestor of the Clives of Herefordshire. The reference to his wife in the following letter proves that the builder of Mount Clare was not his kinsman and namesake, George Clive, husband of the celebrated actress Kitty Clive. The letter further indicates that the place had been bought for Mrs. Clive's sake. It was apparently written to a possible purchaser of the property, a conceivable reason for this sudden desire to sell so soon after building the house being possibly afforded by Lord Clive's death in the previous year.

Sidney has broached ideas of parting with Roehampton. I have given it to her in my Will: for her pleasure and the health of my Children are the motives for laying out so much money. However all that expense is over and I made it easy to myself, though, between you and I, it hath cost me nearer 16 than 15000 £ and unless to a Gentleman of easy fortune and who is pleased with the situation, I would never communicate a wish for parting with it.

I am extremely sorry for your uneasiness about Mrs. H. We must all of us feel those muscular complaints if we ever arrive at her years.

Edward has written to us an invitation to a feast and fireworks at Loughborough house the 3 July—he now begins to be weaned from home. Mrs. Pirney is obligingly attentive to him. Next Sunday she brings him to dine with us. Adieu,

Arlington Street. Yours ever,



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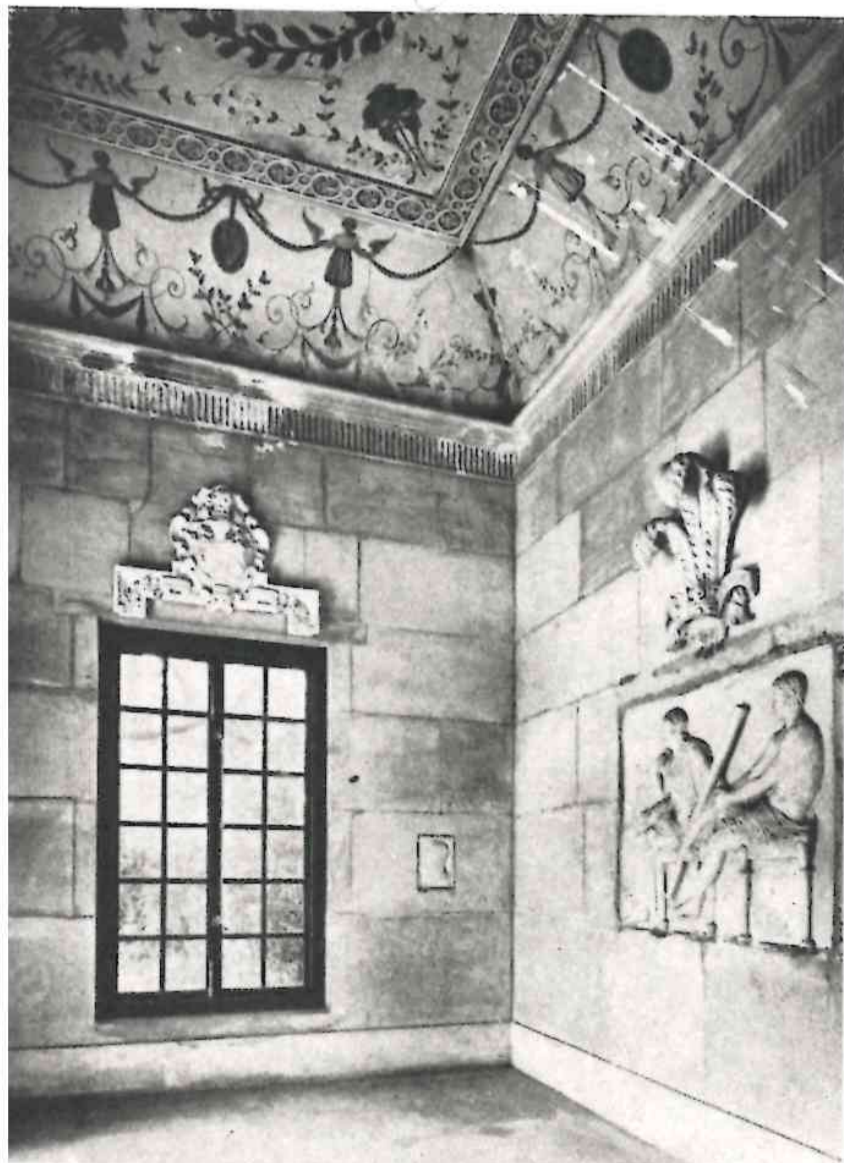
8.—THE LAKE AND THE "TEMPLE OF HONOUR"

"COUNTRY LIFE."

The Edward referred to was presumably his son, Edward Bolton Live.

Mount Clare was not sold till 1780, the year after George Live's death, when it was bought by Sir John Dick, Bt., son of Alexander Dick of Prestonfield, an eminent Edinburgh

physician, who had inherited a fortune and a baronetcy from his elder brother. Watt's *Views* is our authority for his employing "Signor Placidio Colombani, a Milanese architect, to add a Doric Portico to it and many architectural ornaments which render it a complete Italian villa."



9.—INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE



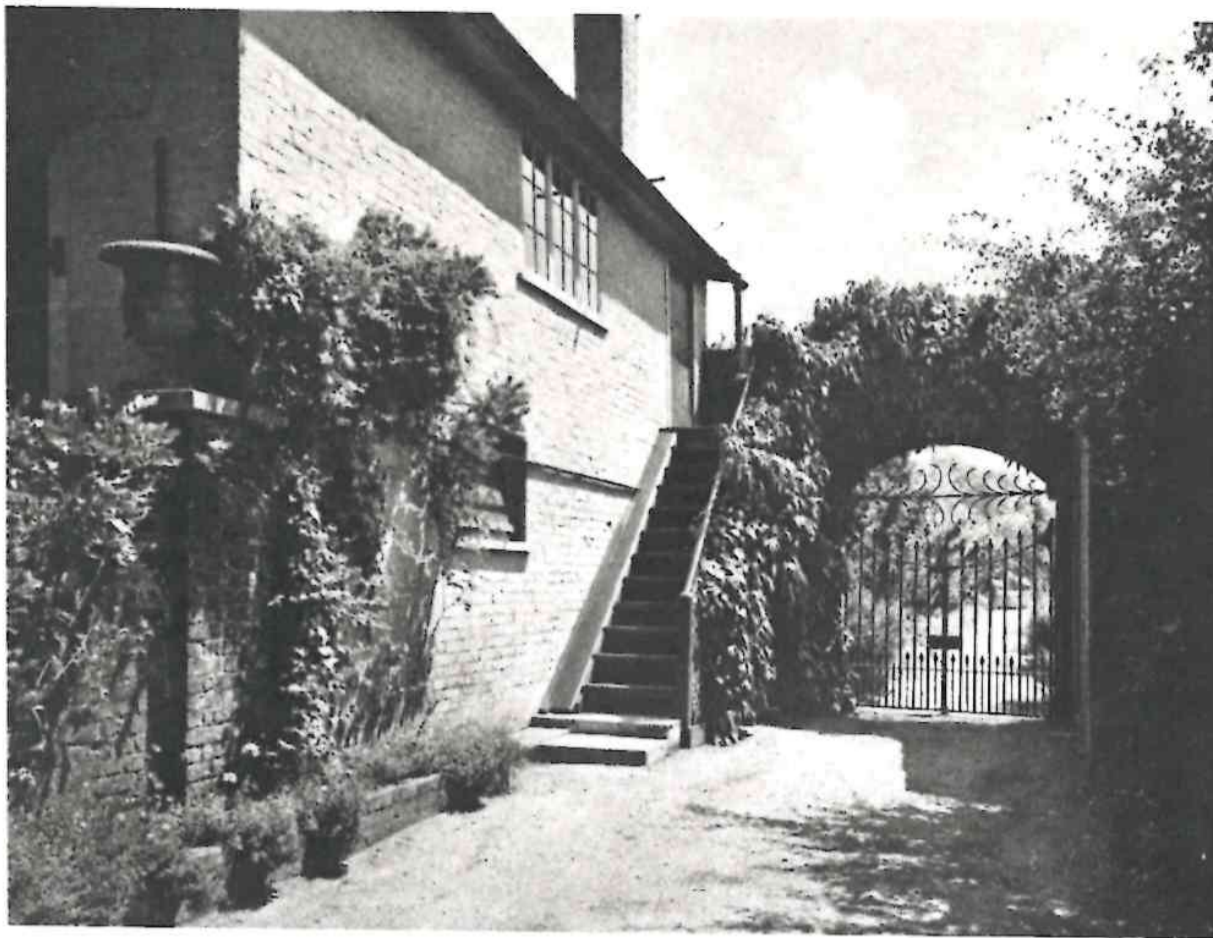
10.—THE GATES AT THE END OF THE AVENUE

Columbani is unknown to the British Museum reading-room or print-room catalogues, and the *Dictionary of Architecture* knows only of a Columbani who built a rococo church in Prague in the earlier half of the eighteenth century. But the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1929) has a short note on our man to the effect that he worked chiefly in England, belonged to the school of Adam and Pergolesi and, like them, frequently designed the enrichments of furniture and decoration. He was a prolific

producer of chimney-pieces, and published books of designs, among others, for vases (1770) and *A New Book of Ornaments* (1775) consisting of arabesques of characteristic Adam type. There can be no question, the note continues, that the English furniture designers of the end of the eighteenth century, and especially the Adams, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton, owed much to his graceful, flowing, classical conceptions, although they are often inferior to those of Pergolesi. The *New Book of Ornaments* has a title page in French, English, Italian, and Latin. It is interesting to note that the French title describes the ornaments—characteristic Adam arabesques—as serving “pour embellir des Chambres à l’Angloise.” Assuming Watts is correct in attributing the Mount Clare portico to Columbani, it is the only instance at present known of his application to external architecture.

The extent of Columbani’s embellishments will be discussed next week, but here it must be explained that for some years yet the house consisted only of the square, five windows wide and three deep, seen in Fig. 2. On the park front a three-sided bay forms the centre, accommodating the octagon room which is the principal feature of the plan. In view of George Clive’s admiration and affection for his great cousin, carried to the extent of settling near him in a house christened with a similar name, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he may have employed the same architect. A definite attribution of the design to Holland would be rash in view of the uncertainty as to how much Columbani redecorated the interior. But there is nothing to contradict this view, which is certainly supported by the well proportioned simplicity of the exterior. The fact that the farm cottages (Fig. 7) are built of cob—a material that Holland was instrumental in repopularising—tends further to support the claim.

Dick, who had not succeeded his aged father when he bought Mount Clare in 1780, had probably just returned from a Grand Tour. The portico that he immediately added entirely “makes” the entrance front (Fig. 2). The addition is very skilfully conceived and gives a curiously “colonial” air to the house. Such raised but single



11.—LOOKING INTO THE KITCHEN GARDEN PAST THE STABLES

There is a frontage of half a mile on to Richmond Park, and in no direction is any house visible. The Beverley Brook sparkles in the Park valley which lies between Mount Clare and the hills of White Lodge, and to the east there is a glorious view over Combe to the Epsom Downs. The portico commands luscious meadows backed by elms and poplars, with a glimpse of the stables, walled garden, and farm to the right, while the view south-westwards from the garden front is over one of the grandest parks in the country (Fig. 5). The gardens spread eastwards and culminate in a little lake (Fig. 8), on the farther bank of which is erected a miniature Doric temple. This was removed here thirty years ago from the adjoining grounds of Bessborough House, so that it may very likely have been designed by Sir William Chambers. The interior is remarkable for a ceiling painted in arabesques which shows no sign of its journey. It was known in Lord Bessborough’s time as “the Temple of Honour.”

The kitchen garden is approached from the house by a pleached lime alley (between drifts of bulbs in early summer). Its mellow brick walls, against which fruit and tender shrubs do well, and its ample borders backed by old apples and pears, would make it agreeable anywhere. Here, within the administrative county of London, it is a little paradise. Beyond it are the farm buildings, and adjoining it the stables, beside which is a gateway with an unusual, and effective, kind of *chevaux de frise* (Fig. 11).

The chestnut avenue from Priory Lane was probably planted by George Clive. The gates (Fig. 10) at its entrance, however, are an excellent introduction by the present owner, and were designed by Messrs. Imrie and Angel. The avenue centres in the other direction on a remarkably beautiful statue (Fig. 12) erected in memory of the late Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Colin Smith, and on it are written the names of their eight children, whose home was here. It is a copy in lead from the original by an unknown artist which is at St. Paul’s Walden Bury, and was placed there by Mary Bowes, Countess of Strathmore—the heiress of St. Paul’s Walden.



12.—LEAD STATUE TO MR. AND MRS. HUGH COLIN SMITH

A copy of that placed by Mary Bowes, Countess of