

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - *Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1*

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Books of enduring scholarly value

Printing and Publishing History

The interface between authors and their readers is a fascinating subject in its own right, revealing a great deal about social attitudes, technological progress, aesthetic values, fashionable interests, political positions, economic constraints, and individual personalities. This part of the Cambridge Library Collection reissues classic studies in the area of printing and publishing history that shed light on developments in typography and book design, printing and binding, the rise and fall of publishing houses and periodicals, and the roles of authors and illustrators. It documents the ebb and flow of the book trade supplying a wide range of customers with products from almanacs to novels, bibles to erotica, and poetry to statistics.

Aedes Althorpianae

The bibliophile aristocrat George Spencer (1758–1834) employed Thomas Frognall Dibdin (1776–1847) as his librarian for life. The second earl had amassed the greatest private library in Europe, housed at Althorp, and Dibdin was tasked with cataloguing the vast collection and sourcing suitable editions to add to it. In 1814, Dibdin began publishing his four-volume catalogue, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* (also reissued in this series). *Aedes Althorpianae* was published in two volumes in 1822, and although it is to a great extent devoted to further details of the great library and its contents, it is also illuminating for its detailed history of Althorp and the Spencers. Its descriptions of the internal decoration of Althorp, particularly its art, are accompanied by numerous illustrations. Volume 1 includes descriptions of the various illustrated works in the library, such as a volume of original drawings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and a sumptuous illuminated Magna Carta.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library and other partner libraries, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection brings back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Aedes Althorpianae

*An Account of the Mansion, Books,
and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence
of George John Earl Spencer,
to which is Added a Supplement
to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana*

VOLUME 1

THOMAS FROGNALL DIBDIN



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108057264

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2012

This edition first published 1822

This digitally printed version 2012

ISBN 978-1-108-05726-4 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Aedes Althorpianae.



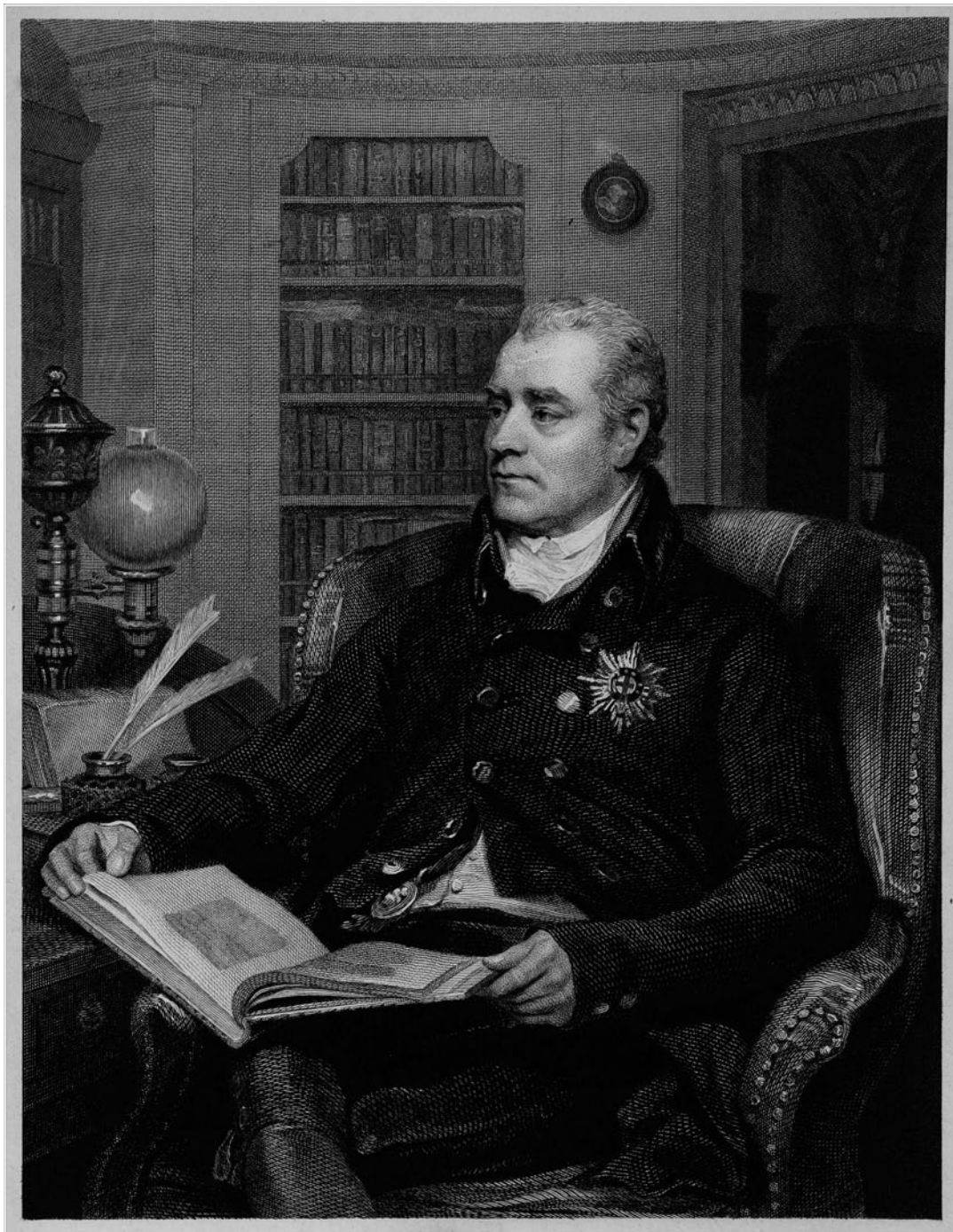
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



W. Fendler, sculp. sit.

GEORGE JOHN EARL SPENCER, K. G. &c. &c. &c.

From the Original Picture by Tho:^s Phillips, Esq:^r B. A.

London, Published for the Rev T. F. Dibdin, 1822.

Printed by Lohse.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Aedes Althorpianae;
OR
**AN ACCOUNT OF THE MANSION,
BOOKS, AND PICTURES,
AT ALTHORP;
THE RESIDENCE OF
GEORGE JOHN EARL SPENCER, K. G.
TO WHICH IS ADDED
A SUPPLEMENT TO THE BIBLIOTHECA
SPENCERIANA.**



BY THE REV.
THOMAS FROGNALL DIBDIN, F.R.S. S.A.
LIBRARIAN TO HIS LORDSHIP.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY W. NICOL, SUCCESSOR TO W. BULMER AND CO.
Shakspeare Press,
AND SOLD BY PAYNE AND FOSS, LONGMAN, HURST AND CO. J. AND
A. ARCH, R. H. EVANS, R. TRIPHOOK, AND JOHN MAJOR.
1822.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E .

THE Public have been so long in possession of the *Prospectus* of this Work, that it will not be necessary to detain them with any lengthened description of its contents.

Like almost every other publication, projected a considerable period before its completion, the present has received partial *alterations*; which will nevertheless, it is presumed, be admitted as *improvements*. The truth is, that in filling up the outline of such a plan, many subordinate objects present themselves, which had escaped previous attention; and many things become more important than they had originally appeared. Thus, the personal history of the ancient noble occupiers of Althorp has been unavoidably extended beyond the limits first proposed; but it was presumed that this portion of the Work would be generally interesting, inasmuch as it would be difficult to write a history of our country, for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which the Ancestors of the present

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Noble Owner of Althorp did not act very distinguished parts.

The Account of the Mansion is comparatively brief. Unpretending as that Mansion is, in an architectural point of view, and situated in a domain not remarkable for picturesque beauty, I have been anxious—notwithstanding the eulogies bestowed upon it by ancient travellers—to introduce the visitor to its *interior* attractions, and especially to its LIBRARY; which, as a private Collection, may be considered unrivalled. But it is in fact the number, condition, magnificence, and value, of the BOOKS THEMSELVES, which have somewhat distracted me in the *choice* to be presented to the Reader. Accordingly, while I have made a systematic Catalogue of that portion only which relates to impressions of the SACRED TEXT, I have, in the selection of other branches, given only what may be called a bird's eye view of the treasures contained in them. Hence, the well-informed may draw a pretty correct conclusion of the value of a COMPLETE CATALOGUE of the SPENCER LIBRARY executed in a similar manner.

The Volumes, exclusively belonging to the Library of DE THOU—instead of occupying a distinct space—have been, for the greater part, embodied in the respective classes to which they belong.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

vii

The ALDINE VOLUMES, once intended as a separate division, have been given up, as an unnecessary encroachment upon these pages; first, because *all* those printed in the *Fifteenth Century* will be found described in the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, and in the second volume of this Work; and, secondly, because it has been judged expedient to preserve the ALDINE COLLECTION in *London*, and not at *Althorp*.

Meanwhile, the Supplement to the BIBLIOTHECA SPENCERIANA, afforded in the *second* volume of this Work, will be found to contain an account of many rare and curious volumes, both of a classical and miscellaneous character, which were wanting in his Lordship's Library. The embellishments in this second volume are, with one exception (p. 134), from WOODEN BLOCKS; of which the greater number will be found interesting of their kind; while the *Art of Printing* appears, in the same volume, more beautiful if possible than in those which have preceded it.

As to the embellishments in the *first* volume, which are exclusively from COPPER PLATES, it is unnecessary to dilate upon their beauty and value. They are taken from original subjects, which are almost entirely now engraved for the *first time*.

If I have substituted some Portraits in preference to others—originally announced to the Public—I

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

VIII

PREFACE.

have only availed myself of the privilege held out in the Prospectus ; and always with a view of benefiting my readers by such exchange : so that, upon the whole, it is hoped that this Work will be honoured with the same favourable attention which has been bestowed upon its precursors.

T. F. D.

*Kensington ;
April 1, 1822.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

	Page
ACCOUNT OF THE PROPRIETORS OF ALTHORP -	iii
THE HALL - - - - -	1
THE DINING ROOM - - - - -	6
THE DRAWING ROOM - - - - -	13
THE LIBRARY—called <i>The Long Library</i> - -	20
<i>The Raphael Library</i> -	24
<i>The Billiard Library</i> -	25
<i>The Marlborough Library</i>	26
<i>The Gothic Library</i> -	31
<i>Biblia Polyglotta</i> - - -	38
<i>Hebraica</i> - - -	40
<i>Græca</i> - - -	45
<i>Latina</i> - - -	49
<i>French Bibles</i> - - -	57
<i>English Bibles</i> - - -	61
<i>Italian Bibles</i> - - -	84
<i>German and Dutch Bibles</i> - -	88
<i>Bibles in various Tongues</i> - -	90
<i>Editions of the Old Testament</i> -	93
<i>of the Pentateuch</i> - -	94
<i>of the Psalter</i> - -	96
<i>of the Prophets</i> - -	100
<i>of the New Testament</i> -	101
<i>of Portions of the N. Test.</i>	119
<i>Greek Classics</i> - - -	123
<i>Latin Classics</i> - - -	136

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

	Page
THE LIBRARY— <i>Miscellaneous Latin Books</i>	- 141
<i>Editions of Ariosto</i>	- 156
<i>Miscellaneous English Books</i>	- 164
<i>Illustrated Works</i>	- 198
THE STAIR CASE	- 237
THE PICTURE GALLERY	- 243
BED ROOMS	- 274

ERRATA.

Page 145.—The ‘CORPUS SCRIPTORUM HISTORIÆ BYZANTINÆ,’ is erroneously placed among Latin, instead of Greek Books.

Page 233, line 12, for POLITY read POLICY.

ADDITION.

Page 233.—‘CLARENDON’S RELIGION AND POLICY.’—The number of Engravings with which this copy of the above work is illustrated, amounts to *Eleven Hundred and Sixty*, exclusively of the number in the History of the Rebellion.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LIST OF PLATES TO VOLUME I.

GEORGE John, Earl Spencer, K. G.; from an original portrait, by Phillips	- - - -	facing the title page.
South West View of Althorp	- - - -	iii
Robert, First Baron Spencer	- - - -	xxiii
Henry, First Earl of Sunderland	- - - -	xxviii
Anne, Countess of Sunderland	- - - -	li
Archway and Dairy	- - - -	lxii
Ground Plan of Althorp House— <i>immediately following the preceding.</i>		
Sophonisba Angosciola	- - - -	6
A Calm, by Cuyp	- - - -	9
Fragment, from Raffaele	- - - -	11
Masked Ball	- - - -	14
Interior of the Long Library	- - - -	20
Rembrandt's Mother	- - - -	21
Viscount Althorp	- - - -	25
John, Duke of Marlborough	- - - -	26
The Stair Case	- - - -	237
John, Marquis of Blandford	- - - -	238
Georgiana, First Countess Spencer	- - - -	239
Margaret, Countess of Lucan	- - - -	240
Sir John Spencer, Knt.	- - - -	241
Henry VIII., Queen Mary, and Will Somers	- - - -	244
Nell Gwynn	- - - -	247
The Duchess of Portsmouth	- - - -	249
Lady Denham	- - - -	250
Mrs. Middleton	- - - -	251
Colonel John Russell	- - - -	259
Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough	- - - -	263
Sir Kenelm Digby,	- - - -	265
Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire	- - - -	266
Unknown Portrait	- - - -	269
Algernon Sydney	- - - -	272

George John, Earl Spencer, Ætat. xvii., to face the title-
page of Vol. II.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

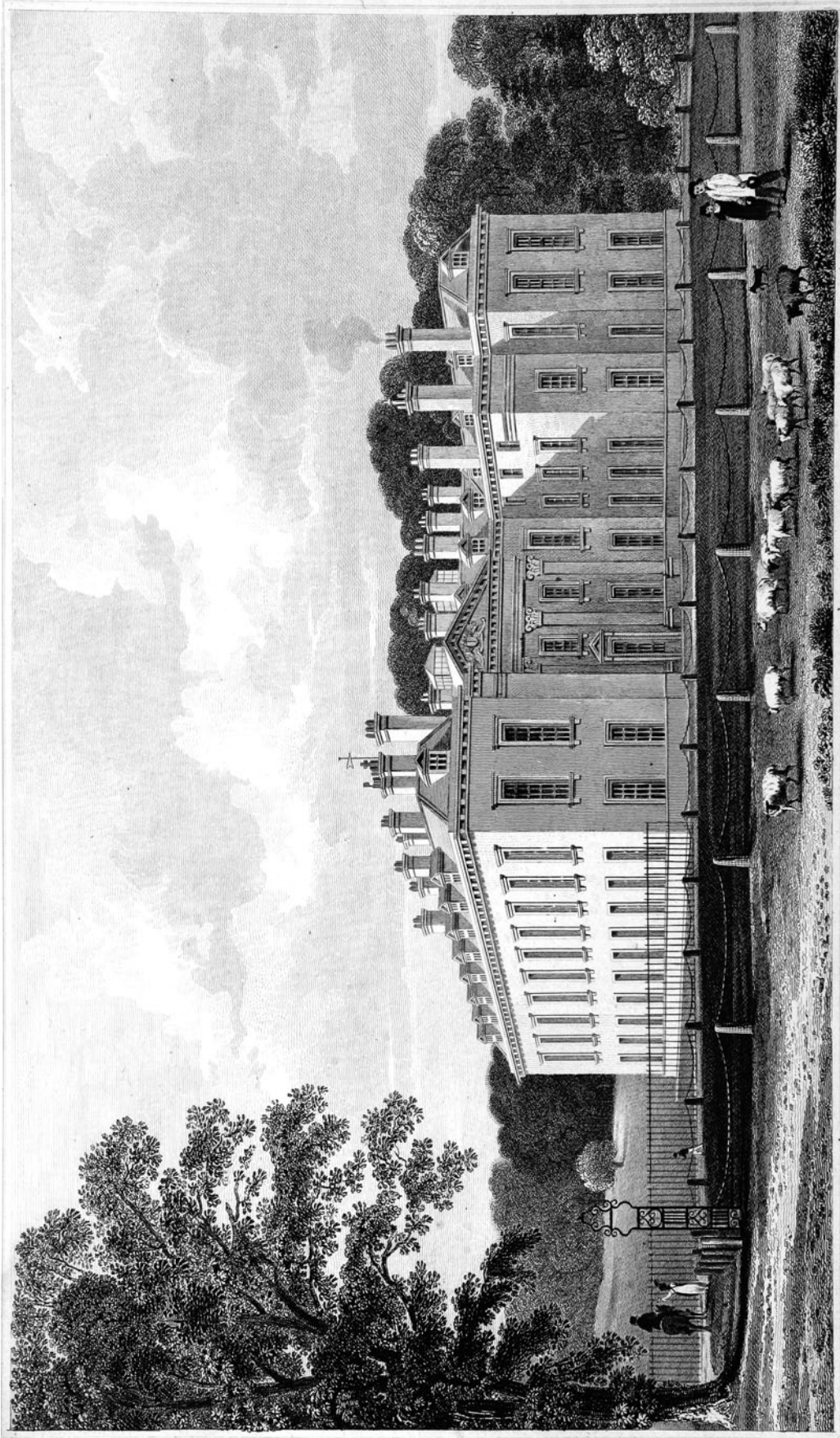
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

SOME
ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP.

VOL. I.

b



F. Elme del.

London: Published for the Rev. T. Dibdin, 1827.

W. Wainthorp Sc.

SOUTH WEST VIEW OF ALTHORP.

The Seat of the R: Hon^{ble}: George John Earl Spencer K.G.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - *Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1*

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

SOME

ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP.

THE House and Park at ALTHORP* are situated in the parish of *Great Brington*, in *New Bottle Grove Hundred*, in the county of Northampton, at the distance of about six miles from Northampton. This domain has been possessed by the SPENCER FAMILY upwards of three centuries; but the exact period of the erection of the house seems to be unknown. There is however no question of its having received its principal improvements during the time of the first Earl of Sunderland, (1636-1643) who was son of the second Baron Spencer. The Lady of this Earl (daughter of Robert Sidney, second Earl of Leicester, and better known as the SACHARISSA of Waller the poet) erected, and covered in, the great staircase—which had been formerly an interior court yard, in the fashion of the times. From that period, to the present, both the house and park have continued to receive improvements which will be duly noticed in the order of these pages.

In the account of the Family, by whom the celebrity of this place has been so long maintained, it will not be deemed necessary to repeat those minute details of pedigree which are to be found in the pages of county historians and genealogists. Satisfied with the recent efforts of Mr. Baker,† both the reader and

* Formerly called “Alidetorp” — “Olletorp,” “Oldthorpe.” See Baker’s *History of the County of Northampton*, p. 110. It is even yet spelt with a final e, as Althorpe.

† *History of the County of Northampton*, part i. p. 109. Collins, in his

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

iv ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP. [A. D. 1507

author may be anxious only for a few particulars which are contemporaneous with the family's residence at Althorp; and which relate to those characters—once famed for their hospitality and wealth—of whom the monumental effigies are to be seen in the chancel of the parish church.* The family of the SPENCERS be-

Peerage, vol. i. p. 378, Edit. Brydges, traces the pedigree up to the DE SPENCERS, in the Conqueror's time, with a doubt however respecting its accuracy, adding:—“The present family are sufficiently great; and have too long enjoyed vast wealth and high honours, to require the decoration of feathers in their cap, which are not their own. Sir John Spencer, their undisputed ancestor, and the immediate founder of their fortune, lived in the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII.; and three hundred years of riches and rank may surely satisfy a regulated pride.” In Milles's *Catalogue of Honor or Treasury of True Nobility*, 1610, folio, I find the shield of Lord Spencer as the twenty-ninth, which is filled, among the Barons. In the large folded plate, in this same work, p. 382, there are also the Spencer arms above an account of Thomas Spencer, “a noble Baron, son of the second Edward Spencer,” &c. created by King Richard II. Earl of Gloucester; the year from Christ's birth 1398, &c.

* An account of the parish church of Brington—wherein the ashes of the SPENCERS lie “quietly inurned”—belongs rather to the county historian than to the chronicler of Althorp. It may be sufficient therefore to observe, that this church is situated on the summit of the highest ground of Brington, or rather of *Great Brington*; and that it is incircled by a stone wall, flanked, in the interior, by trees. A more complete picture of a country church-yard is rarely seen. A well-trimmed walk encircles the whole of the interior; and when viewed from the eastern extremity, in which the fine gothic windows, at the end of the two chancels, come directly in view, the picturesque effect is very pleasing. The church consists of a tower, containing five bells; a nave, with north and south aisles; a chancel, and a north chapel. This chapel is here designated a second chancel. There is little of early or of beautiful architecture to gratify the tasteful antiquary. The building cannot be traced to a more remote period than the xivth. century; but the door-entrances of the tower and south aisle (the latter covered by a modern porch—one of the happiest, or most unhappy, specimens of church-warden taste) of the period in question, are entitled to particular notice and praise. The discovery of an exterior lateral tomb—probably that of *Roger de Wyngfield*, who was rector here in the beginning of the xivth. century—is properly mentioned (together with every other necessary detail connected with the church) by Mr. Baker, in his recent *History of the County*, p. 92, &c.

A great deal of beautiful carving in wood adorns the pew where the family now sits; but this, to the eye of an antiquary, has a less powerful charm than similar specimens of art, of a much earlier date, which are attached to the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

—1512.] ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP.

v

came possessed of the park at Althorp about the year 1512. This originated in a license from the King to John Spencer, afterwards Sir John Spencer. At that time, the Park is described as containing 300 acres of land, 100 acres of wood, and 40 acres of water in “*Oldthorpe* ;” but this seems to have been only an *extension* of some property previously acquired there ; for it is certain that Althorpe, so called, was purchased by this Sir John Spencer as early as the year 1508. The same Sir John afterwards purchased *Newbottle* and *Brington*, and died in the year 1522. His tomb, with the recumbent figures of his wife *ISABELLA*, and himself, is the most ancient of those seen in the chapel of Brington church. It is in the rich gothic style of that period, and

heads of the old pews in the chancel. As these are undoubtedly of the end of the xivth or beginning of the xvth century, and as it is not very improbable that the same fate of decapitation, or destruction, which has befallen their companions, may in a few years attend these—I present the reader with the following specimens ; taken, the one from the left, and the other from the right, on entering the chancel. That, to the left, is *St. Margaret*. The right may be —any thing the reader pleases.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

has been recently restored (in the decayed parts) with a strict adherence to the original model.* Of his younger and only brother, THOMAS, who was living in 1504, nothing is known.

The wealth of Sir John Spencer must have been prodigious;† for, exclusively of the purchases above mentioned, he became the proprietor of *Wormleighton* in *Warwickshire*; which place his descendants seem to have occupied, for a long period, as their prin-

* The first print of these tombs, in Mr. Baker's *Hist. of the County of Northampton*, will give a correct notion of the beauty of the tomb in question. The inscription on the tomb is thus :

“Here lieth the Boddies of Sir John Spencer Knight & dame Isabell his Wife one of the daughters & coheirs of Walter Graunt of Snitterfield in the Countie of War: Esquier her Mother was the daughter & heire of Humphrie Rudinge of the Wich in the coun: of Worcester Esq: which John and Isabell had issu Sir Will'm Spencer knight 1. Anthony Spencer 2. Who died without issu. Jane Wife to Rich: Knightley Esquier Son'e & Heire of Sir Richarde Knightley of Fawsley in the countie of North: Knight. Isabell married to Sir Nic's: Strelley of Strelly, in the cou'tie of Nott. knight. Dorothee married to Sir Rich: catesbie of legers ashbie in the coun. of North: kni: which Sir John Spenc: departed this life the 14 of Apr: Ao D'ni 1522.

† Arising chiefly, as was the case of nearly all proprietors of land of that period, from the great stock of SHEEP. The injury sustained by the comparative neglect of tillage, and the cultivation of pasture land, did not escape the attention of the legislature; and accordingly the statute of the 25 Hen. VIII. c. 13, recited—that “diuers couetous persons, espying the great profit of *sheepe*, have gotten into theyr hands great portions of the grounds of this Realme, conuerting them to pasture from tillage, and keepe some 10,000, some 20,000, some 24,000 sheepe, whereby Churches and Towns be pulled down, rents of land inhaunced, and the prices of cattell and vittaille greatly raised,” &c. The evil which arose from the excess of pasturage over tillage, has also been noticed by Sir Thomas More; who, about six or seven years before the death of Sir John Spencer, thus observed, in his *Utopia*,—“your SHEEP, that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters; now, as I hear say, be become so great devourers, and so wild, that they eat up, and swallow down, the *very men themselves*. They consume, destroy, and devour whole fields, houses, and cities; for look—in what parts of the realm doth grow the finest, and therefore dearest wool—there, noblemen and gentlemen, yea, and certain abbots, (holy men, no doubt!) not contenting themselves with the yearly revenues and profits that were wont to grow to their forefathers, and predecessors of their lands, now being content that they live in rest and pleasure, nothing profiting—yea, much noying—the weal-public, leave no ground for tillage: they inclose all into pastures: they throw down houses; they pluck down towns, and leave nothing standing but only the church, to be made a SHEEP-HOUSE.” *Edit.* 1808,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

—1522.] ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP. vii

cipal residence; and from which Robert Spencer, the first Baron, (and great-grandson to Sir John) was called up to the House of Peers as “Baron Spencer of Wormleighton.” This latter place was purchased by Sir John, of William Cope, Esq. in 1506; and Dugdale tells us, that the purchaser “soon after began the structure of a fair mansion-house, wherein, when that inquisition was taken, he had his residence with lx. persons of his family, being a good benefactor to the church in ornaments and other things.” *Hist. of Warwickshire*, p. 405, 1656. But in Dugdale’s time Wormleighton was also the residence of the first Earl of Sunderland; and the two houses of Wormleighton and Althorp seem to have been maintained with an almost equally splendid establishment, till the time of the second Earl of Sunderland, who appears to have resided chiefly at Althorp. During his time, this mansion was designated, by a foreign traveller of rank and taste, “as the best planned and best arranged country seat in the kingdom; for though (in the same opinion) many surpassed it in size, none were superior to it in symmetrical elegance.” *Travels of Cosmo the Third*, 1669, 1821, 4to. p. 250.

However this noble family may have resided chiefly at Wormleighton, it is certain that they did not neglect either the rites of hospitality, or the cultivation of the grounds, at Althorp. Collins tells us, that Sir John Spencer, grandfather of the first Baron, (in the middle of the xvith century), “ordered *hospitality* to be kept in his houses at ALTHORP, &c. by his heir, after his decease, according as he had done;* and there is no question that the same spirit of hospitality was maintained by every succeeding generation, at the same place. In regard to the preservation or improvement of the park, we know that the oak trees, which appear at the extremity of it, nearest to the church at Brington,

vol. i. p. 58. Polydore Virgil, who was also a contemporary of Sir John Spencer, “expatiates with visible complacency on the various pleasures of those tables at which he had feasted; on the *juicy flavour of the mutton*, and the sweetness of the beef, especially when slightly salted.” *Henry’s Hist. of Great Britain*, vol. xii. p. 375.

* *Collins’s Peerage*; vol. i. p. 386. Edit. 1812. The portrait of this Sir John Spencer, the earliest in the series of the Spencer Portraits, will be found engraved on the OPPOSITE PAGE. Some brief particulars about his character will be given in the series of Portraits—hereafter described.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP. [A. D. 1586

and running in part parallel with the wall of separation, were growing there at the time of the purchase by the first Sir John Spencer, in the reign of Henry VII. But his grandson Sir John was, I apprehend, the *first planter* of trees; of which the experiment was commemorated by a stone tablet, with the following inscription thereupon:

THIS WOOD WAS PLANTED BY
SIR JOHN SPENCER KNIGHT
GRANDFATHER OF ROBERT LORD
SPENCER IN THE YEARES OF
OVR LORD 1567 AND 1568.

His son, also Sir John, who died quite at the conclusion of the xvith century, continued this good fashion of planting, and of commemorating its date, by means of a similar tablet, on which the inscription is as follows:

THIS WOOD WAS PLANTED BY
SIR JOHN SPENCER KNIGHT
FATHER OF ROBERT LORD
SPENCER IN THE YEARE
OF OVR LORD 1589.

The two oak-plantations of the father and son, run in a straight line, at right angles, with the more ancient trees before described; and those of the son, in particular, (from some supposed superior congeniality of soil,) now assume a beautiful and picturesque appearance; their forms being bold and towering. This part of the park, although of limited dimensions, has somewhat of a forest-cast of scenery; and is also remarkable for having an *Hernery*—one of the very few in the kingdom.

The son of the last Sir John, afterwards the first BARON SPENCER, had the good sense to imitate the example of his forefathers. He planted largely and successfully—as is attested by a stone tablet, upon a somewhat larger scale than the two preceding, upon which the inscription runs thus:

THIS WOOD WAS PLANTED
BY ROBERT LORD SPENCER
IN THE YEARES OF OVR LORD
1602 AND 1603.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

—1603.] ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP. ix

The work of planting, and of commemorating the period of plantation, continued under the Second Baron Spencer, second son of the first Baron, when he was Sir William Spencer, and Knight of the Bath. There is a wooded walk, running obliquely from the NW. corner of the mansion, up a gentle ascent, through which the family pass, as the nearest foot way, to the church. This wooded walk contains beech trees on one side, and oak trees on the other; and the date of the plantation of them is thus attested.

THIS WOOD WAS
PLANTED BY SIR
WILLIAM SPENCER
KNIGHT OF THE
BATHE IN THE
YEARE OF OVR
LORD 1624.

On the reverse of the Stone.

VP AND BEE
DOING AND
GOD WILL
PROSPER.

It has hence obtained the name of the “UP AND BE DOING WOOD;”* and some notion may be formed of its picturesque appearance, in certain points of view, from the following representation—looking from west to east—as executed by the pencil of

* This is a scriptural phrase: see i Chron. c. xxii. v. 16. The earlier versions of this passage come closer to the language of the above inscription. Thus in *Coverdale's Bible* of 1535, it is, “Yet get the vp and be doynge, and the Lorde shal be with the.” In *Matthews*; 1537. “Up therefore and set upō it and y^e Lord shal be w^h the.” In *Grafton's*; 1540. “Up therefore and be doynge, and the Lord shal be wyth the.” In *Barker*; 1607. “Up therefore, and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee.” And in *Barker*; 1611. “Arise therefore and be doing, and the Lord be with thee”—which is the present received text. It appears to have been a current expression of the day. Thus in Cromwell's time, in an ORIGINAL LETTER, of that celebrated man, in the possession of my friend Mr. Dawson Turner—“As if God should say *vp and bee doeing*, and I will help you, and stand by you,” &c. The letter was written on the capture of Gainsborough. The battle of Gainsborough was the most decisive and important of Cromwell's earlier achievements. The letter, describing it, is full of bustle and interest—“wee came vp (says Cromwell) horse to horse, when wee disputed itt with our swords and pistols, a pretty tyme, all keepinge close order,” &c. Here fell the gallant Colonel Cavendish, on the part of the Royalists. In Cromwell's letter, he is described as having been pursued into a ditch, by Major Whaley, who stabbed him below “the short ribs.”

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP. [A. D. 1603

Mr. Blore. At the same time it may be mentioned, that an enlarged engraving of the stone, exhibiting that side on which the arms of Sir William Spencer appear, may be seen at the last page of the second volume of the **BIBLIOTHECA SPENCERIANA**.



Such was the state of the park at Althorp, when the famous JOHN EVELYN paid his first visit there during the time of Robert, second Earl of Sunderland. The gradual advance of so many young trees towards maturity, together with the dates of their plantation, struck the inquisitive eye of our British Columella; and after observing (in his *SYLVA*) that “it was the only instance he knew of the like in our country,” he recommends to general

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

—1627.] ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP. xi

adoption the practice of recording the time when any considerable plantation is begun. The park now contains about 500 acres.

The Spencers had long possessed other property* in Warwickshire, besides the estate at Wormleighton. The grand-father of the first Sir John was in possession of *Hodnell*, in the manor of Nun Eaton; but his son John, an uncle of the first Sir John, sold it, in conjunction with one Thomas Brauncefield, a co-proprietor, to Thomas Wilkes “a merchant of the staple.” *Dugdale*, p. 218. *Herdwick Priors*, in the same county, after being in the possession of the Knightleys, was purchased of Arthur, son of Sir William Samuel, of Upton, by William, the second Baron Spencer, and whose younger son Robert was in possession of it at the time of Dugdale. But it was at *Claverdon*, in the same county, that the name of Spencer was hardly less respected for its hospitable virtues than at Wormleighton. THOMAS SPENCER, younger son of the second Sir John Spencer, and uncle of the first Baron Spencer, purchased this place of the crown; “which Thomas, having obtained a lease of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester of certain lands in this place, built a very fair mansion thereupon; and for the great hospitality which he kept thereat, was THE MIRROR OF THIS COUNTY. But having no issue male, settled this manor (inter alia) upon Sir William Spencer, Baronet, son and heir of Sir Thomas, and he of Sir William, sometime of Yarnton in Oxfordshire.” *Dugdale*, p. 497. The wealth of this Thomas Spencer was very considerable; for he also purchased *Packwood*, in the same county, “for 2000 pounds for the term of 2000 years—of Robert, the grandson of Robert Burdet of Baumcote, Esq.” This estate also vested in Sir William Spencer of Yarnton† in Oxfordshire. *Dugdale’s Warwickshire*, p. 583.

* Care must be taken to distinguish the Sir John Spencer, father of the first Baron, from the Sir John Spenser, Knt. and Lord Mayor of London—of about the same period; whose only daughter (perhaps the richest heiress in the kingdom) was married to the second Lord Compton, afterwards first Earl of Northampton. Consult the authorities referred to by *Sir E. Brydges in his Memoirs of the Peers in the reign of James I.* p. 460. In Nichols’s *Bibliotheca Topographica*, No. XLIX. p. 12, &c. a most singular account is given of this most singular lady. The wealth of her father seems to have been boundless; and perhaps equal to nearly two millions sterling of our present money.

† The family monuments of the Spencers in Yarnton church are very fine, according to some drawings of them which I have seen.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Meanwhile the collateral branches had been ennobled by several splendid alliances; and, among them, ALICE SPENCER, youngest sister of the “hospitable” Thomas Spencer of Claverdon, was married to *Ferdinand* the fifth EARL OF DERBY; by whom, if she had not “issue to a line of kings,” she had three daughters, all distinguished by their union with three of the most noble families in the realm; viz. those of CHANDOS, BRIDGEWATER, and HUNTINGDON. It was this Alice Spencer for whom Milton is said to have written his *Arcades*; and Sir John Harrington has celebrated her memory by an epigram, Book iii. Epigr. 47.* It was also to this same personage that the poet SPENCER dedicated his “*Tears of the Muses*,” and to her two sisters, ELIZABETH, *Lady Carey*, and ANNE, *Lady Compton and Montague*, that he dedicated his *Muiopotmos* and *Mother Hubbard’s Tale*: the poet himself, in his “*Collin Clout’s come home again*,” thus acknowledging his RELATIONSHIP with them.

Ne lesse prais worthie are the sisters three,
The honor of the noble familie:
Of which I, meanest, boast myself to be,
And most that unto them I am so nie,
Phyllis, Charillis, and sweet *Amarillis*,
Phyllis the faire is eldest of the three:
The next to her is bountifull Charillis,
But the youngest is the highest in degree.†

This circumstance has given occasion to a splendid and happy remark of Gibbon, in the *Memoirs* of his own Life. “The nobility of the Spencers (says he) has been illustrated and enriched by the trophies of Marlborough; but I exhort them to consider the FAIRY QUEEN as the most precious jewel of their coronet.”

* I gather the above from *Sir Egerton Brydges’s Memoirs of the Peers in the Reign of James I.* 1802. 8vo. p. 394. Lysons, in his *Environs of London*, p. 112, has given a print of her tomb, at Harefield; whereon is “her figure, recumbent, in the dress of the times, beneath a rich canopy, and below are the figures of her three daughters, kneeling,” &c. Lysons notices a very rare engraved portrait of this Countess, of which only two copies are known to exist. One is in the collection of the Marquis of Bute, the other in his own. The Countess died in 1636.

† That is, the Countess of Derby. The fictitious names are applied to the characters in the order above mentioned.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

—1627.] ACCOUNT OF ALTHORP. xiii

Consult also *Todd's Life of Spencer*, xxv-vi. My business, however, is more particularly with the the inmates of ALTHORP.

It has been before observed, that Althorp was not so much distinguished as the exclusive residence of the Spencers, till the time of the first Earl of Sunderland, about the year 1640. Yet it must not be forgotten, that it was during the first Lord Spencer's possession of this place, that an entertainment was given to the Queen of James the First, and Prince Henry, their son, on their way to London, in 1603. This entertainment, or *masque*, was composed by the vigorous muse of Ben Jonson, and has been commemorated in a pamphlet, or small quarto tract, published a few years afterwards, under the following title: "*A particular entertainment of the Queene and Prince their Highnesse to Althorpe, at the Right Honourable the Lord Spencer's, on Saturday being the 25th of June, 1603, as they came first into the kingdom, being written by the same author, and not before published.*"*

* This tract is a small quarto volume of eight leaves: containing signatures A and B, in fours. The "entertainment" was in the usual fashionable style of the day—being a sort of rural or pastoral drama; in which fauns, satyrs, shepherds, and allegorical personages, were mixed together in the most singular, and not unamusing, manner. The original tract (in the library at Althorp) is considered to be rare. It was reprinted by the author in the folio edition of his works, in 1616, and will be found in the editions of *Ben Jonson's Works*, by *Whalley* and *Gifford*, under the title of *The Satyr*. Mr. Gifford says, "The Queen and Prince Henry, in their journey from Edinburgh to London, came from Holdenby to Northampton, where they were received in great state by the municipal magistrates. James, who had joined them at Eaton, the seat of Sir G. Fermor in Northamptonshire, passed forward; (perhaps, as Mr. Gifford intimates, at p. 477, "with Sir Robert Spencer, afterwards Baron, to Theobalds"—where we *know* that Sir Richard Spencer was made a Knight with twenty-eight others;) but the Queen and Prince were prevailed upon to take up their residence for a few days at the seat of Sir Robert Spencer, about four miles from the town. It was on this occasion that this exquisite entertainment was presented to them as they entered the park and grounds at Althorpe." *Jonson's Works*, edit. 1816. vol. vi. p. 468.

The reader will probably not be displeased if a portion of this poetical entertainment be "served up" to him; especially as Mr. Gifford thinks that "Milton has numerous obligations" to it. I shall select only the commencement and conclusion, adding the same gentleman's very just observations upon the subject.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05726-4 - Aedes Althorpianae: An Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp, the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, to which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana: Volume 1

Thomas Frognall Dibdin

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

“ It is easy, or rather it is not easy, (says Mr. Gifford) to conceive the surprise and delight with which Queen Anne, who had a natural taste for these elegant and splendid exhibitions, must

“ The invention was, to have a Satyre lodged in a little Spinet, by which her Maiestie, and the Prince were to come, who (at the report of certaine cornets that were divided in severall places of the Parke, to signify her approach) advanced his head about the toppe of the wood, wondring, and (with his Pipe in his hand) began as followeth :

SATIRE.

Here! there! and euery where!
Some solemnities are neare,
That these changes strike mine eare :
My pipe and I a part shall beare.

And after a short straine with his Pipe, again :

Look, see ; (beshrew this tree ;)
What may all this wonder bee ?
Pipe it, who that list for me :
P'le flie out abroad, and see.

There hee leaped downe, and gazing the Queene and Prince in the face, went forward.

That is Cyparissus face!
And the Dame hath Syrinx grace!
O that Pan were now in place!
Sure they are of heauenly race.

Here he ranne into the wood againe, and hid himselfe whilst to the sound of excellent soft musique that was there concealed in the thicket, there came tripping up the lawne a Bevy of Faeries, attending on Mab their Queene, who falling into an artificiall ring, that was there cut in the pathe, began to daunce a round, whilst their mistresse spake as followeth :

FAERIE.

Haile, and welcome, worthiest Queene,
Joy had never perfect beene,
To the Nimphes that haunt this Greene,
Had they not this euening seene.
Now they Print it on the Ground
With their feete in figures round,
Markes that will be euer found,
To remember this glad stound.

The Satyre peeping out of the bush, said.

Trust her not you bonny-bell,
Shee will forty leasinges tell,
I doe know her pranks right well.