

**WEST
DENE MANOR**

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West Dene Manor by J. A. Owen

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J. A. OWEN

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BY

J. A. OWEN

*Author of "Candelaria," "Forest, Field, and Fell," "The Country,
Month by Month," Editor of "On Surrey Hills," etc.*

"For me this freshness in the morning hours,
For me the water's clear tranquillity;
For me the soft descent of chestnut flowers;
The cushat's cry for me.

"The lovely laughter of the wind-swayed wheat;
The easy slope of yonder pastoral hill;
The sedgy brook whereby the red kine meet
And wade and drink their fill."

ILLUSTRATED BY CAROLINE MANNING.



LONDON

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1896

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WEST DENE MANOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE COUSINS.

“Gracious to all ; but where her love was due,
So fast, so faithful, loyal, and so true,
That a bold hand as soon might hope to force
The lights of heaven, as change her course.”

“A rosebud set with little wilful thorns.”

E. WALTER.

PERHAPS few more comfortable rooms were to be found than the library at West Dene. If its original architect could have been reintroduced to it in this age of *bric-a-brac*, he might have had some difficulty in recognizing it, with its airy windows, its silken draperies, and innumerable knick-knacks, as the gloomy though

handsome wainscotted room which had been his pride some two centuries back.

Perhaps it was an instance of the survival of the fittest, that the library had become, and remained, the favourite room in the house. Successive generations of Warhams had modified its appearance in accordance with the prevailing fashion of the time; but it had never lost its quaint old-world look; and it had an attraction which is absent from the most artistic of modern rooms. For no merely decorative art, however beautiful and fitting, can confer that peculiar charm which clings to a place that has been for many generations the home of refined and educated people whose traditions stretch far back.

The library at West Dene had its halo of tradition too. Royalist and Jacobite had each in turn found shelter within its walls. The room that harboured them opened from it by means of a secret spring in one of its oaken panels. The portraits hanging on the walls were many of them dim with age; but each had its own special story, forming a link with the past.

And the Warhams gloried in their past. They were a proud race, and had more in their history to be proud of than many. Two centuries