

### THEIR HOMES - OUR HERITAGE

To the doomed great houses of Britain the Gowers Report brings hope. But for Diddlington Hall hope comes too late. For long home of the Ashursts, it falls victim to high taxation. Its treasures, like this marble fireplace from the Vatican, taking their chance at auction alongside the more useful bath. With their lovely grounds, the great houses are the treasures of our countryside. To see them come visitors from overseas. Around them, through the centuries, village life has centred. Today it's a ceaseless struggle against crippling taxes and high costs to ward off the auctioneer's hammer.

Today, South Lysett Manor is no more the home of the Lees family. To run it costs more than is left of their income after taxation. To keep the Manor in good condition - whilst they live in a cottage - is the only hope. To that purpose go profits from the refreshments stall at the gate. In the old families there is no sense of possession. Instead, they belong to the homes which they receive in trust, cherish and pass on.

The future of Blenheim Palace (which the nation gave to one of its greatest soldiers, Marlborough) must depend largely on its visitors. For a small sum the great rooms are theirs to explore, perhaps with the Duke of Marlborough himself as guide ... or his Duchess. The first Duchess, the great Sarah (Queen Anne's friend) built Blenheim and its famous Long Library. "Marlborough lived here" means so much more coming from his descendant, Lord Charles, younger son of the present Duke.

Tapestries tell the story of Blenheim, but the family link us with the victor himself and his greatest descendant, Winston Churchill. He was born here and (in the grounds, as his painting reminds us) later won his gracious lady. Thus the great houses make our history live. To save them from death is the aim of the Gowers report.