

The Stately Homes of England

NoÃ«l Coward

Lord Elderly, Lord Borrowmere
Lord Sickert and Lord Camp
With every virtue, every grace
Ah, what avails the sceptred race

Here you see the four of us
And there are so many more of us
Eldest sons
That must succeed
We know how Caesar conquered Gaul
And how to whack a cricket ball
Apart from this, our education
Lacks co-ordination
Though we're young
And tentative
And rather rip-representative
Scions of a noble breed
We are the products of those homes
Serene and stately
That only lately
Seem to have run to seed

The stately homes of England
How beautiful they stand
To prove the upper classes
Have still the upper hand
Though the fact that they have to be rebuilt
And frequently mortgaged to the hilt
Is inclined to take the gilt
Off the gingerbread
And certainly damps the fun
Of the eldest son
But still, we won't be beaten
We'll scrimp and scrape and save
The playing fields of Eton
Have made us frightfully brave
And though if the Van Dycks have to go
And we pawn the Bechstein Grand
We'll stand

By the stately homes of England

Here you see
The pick of us
You may be heartily sick of us
Still, with sense
We're all imbued
Our homes command extensive views
And with assistance from the Jews
We have been able to dispose of
Rows and rows and rows of
Gainsboroughs and Lawrences
Some sporting prints of Aunt Florence's
Some of which were rather rude
Although we sometimes flaunt our family conventions
Our good intentions
Mustn't be misconstrued
The stately homes of England
We proudly represent
We only keep them up
For Americans to rent
Though the pipes that supply the bathroom burst
And the lavatory makes you fear the worst
It was used by Charles I
(Quite informally)
And later by George IV
On a journey north
The state departments keep their
Historical renown
It's wiser not to sleep there
In case they tumble down
But still, if they ever catch on fire
Which, with any luck, they might
We'll fight
For the stately homes of England

The stately homes of England
Though rather in the lurch
Provide a lot of chances
For psychical research
There's the ghost of a crazy younger son
Who murdered in 1351
An extremely rowdy nun
Who resented it
And people who come to call

Meet her in the hall
The baby in the guest wing
Who crouches by the grate
Was walled up in the west wing

In 1428

If anyone spots
The Queen of Scots
In a hand-embroidered shroud
We're proud
Of the stately homes of England

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