

# Early Books and Early Readers at Nostell Priory

## Part I

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### *Introduction*

The great Palladian mansion of Nostell Priory (fig. 1) is situated five miles south-east of Wakefield, on the road to Doncaster. The house takes its name from the Augustinian priory dedicated to St Oswald that was founded on the site in the 12th century. After the Dissolution in the 1530s, three ranges of the original monastic building had been converted into a manor house, Nostall Hall, acquired by the Winn family in 1654. The present house was begun by Sir Rowland Winn, 4th Baronet (1706–1765), in the 1730s, the original designs drawn up by a local gentleman-amateur, Colonel James Moyser of Beverley. Moyser's plans were modified by James Paine (1725–1789), who worked at Nostell for over thirty years from 1736. With the succession of Sir Rowland Winn, 5th Baronet, in 1765, Paine's responsibilities were taken over by Robert Adam (1728–1792), who was commissioned to complete the house.

Over the ensuing twenty years Adam fitted out a series of sumptuous neo-classical interiors and submitted proposals for four new wings attached to each corner of the main block of the house. These plans, however, were abruptly abandoned in 1785, when the 5th Baronet was killed in a carriage accident, leaving the interiors of the Top Hall, the Tapestry Room and the north-east wing incomplete. The remaining three wings were never built, and work recommenced in earnest only when Charles Winn (1795–1874) inherited the house in 1817. Within two years Winn had contracted the London decorator and upholsterer Thomas Ward to redecorate extensively and to furnish many of the rooms left unfinished. The York architects Watson, Pritchett & Watson were engaged to draw up ambitious schemes for balancing the north and south ends of