

THE VYNE, BASINGSTOKE, HAMPSHIRE.

THIS "poor house" of The Vyne, as its builder, the first Lord Sandys, described it in some of his letters, lying in the pleasant county of Hants, is rich in historic memories, architectural interests, and beauty and variety of internal adornments. Many Royal and eminent personages have sojourned within its walls, and great events and gay ceremonies have been witnessed by its ancient and stately chambers. The name is of high antiquity, for the place is called "Vynnes" in a deed of 1268,

still preserved in the house. The situation is picturesque and interesting, for the house was erected just where the chalk hills of central Hampshire break into the sylvan vale of the Loddon, and it stands in its hundred acres, of hill, dale, wood, and water, some three miles north of Basingstoke, with not a few magnificent oaks for its companions.

The estate came to the family of its builder through the marriage, in 1386, of Sir John Sandys with the heiress of the Fyffhydes. The

first Lord Sandys, some time before he was raised to the peerage, upon coming into possession, finding The Vyne "no very great or sumptuous manor place, only contained within the moat, so translated it and augmented it, and besides builded a fair base court, that it became one of the most princely houses in goodly building in all Hampshire." The builder married the niece of Sir Reginald Bray, K.G., the great Tudor architect, who designed the Henry VII. Chapel at Westminster, and it is, perhaps, not hazardous to surmise, since Sir Reginald Bray lived until 1503, that The Vyne may have owed something to his hand.

The work was begun in the later years of Henry VII., and completed early in the reign of his successor. The house is of red brick, with the characteristic diaper, and has stone quoins and battlements. Its windows were



THE BILLIARD-ROOM.



THE ENTRANCE HALL.

originally mullioned, but now most of them are invested with more modern appearance. The Chapel, which is a beautiful structure in the late Perpendicular style, with apsidal termination, fine windows with stained glass, and carved stalls of remarkable character, is one of the most interesting features of the Tudor part of the structure. The Long Gallery belongs to the same period, and appears to have been completed about the year 1515. This magnificent apartment runs the whole length of the west wing, has an extent from end

to end of 82ft., and is panelled throughout with oak, carved in the old linen pattern, there being some 400 panels in all, which, above and below, are adorned with arms, crests, and badges. Over the door in the east wall are the Royal arms, with shields and devices exquisitely carved in an admirable manner. The memorials of the King and Queen Catherine display the Royal arms, crown, Tudor rose, portcullis, fleur de lys, St. George's Cross, and the legend "Great Harri," the triple-crowned castle of Castile, and others. There are

devices also of the friends and kindred of the builder ; the arms, crest, and badge of Sandys, and of Bray, Brocas, De Vere, Essex, Neville, Poulett, and many more, including the arms of Wolsey as cardinal. The Tapestry Room at the north end of the gallery, which is structurally of the same period, though with fittings of a rather later date, has a wonderful mantel, adorned with a richly-

carved shield in the middle, and figures of Justice and Mercy on either side, the whole being thus divided into three compartments, separated by twin Corinthian columns, supporting a carved entablature, quite in the Renaissance spirit, whilst it is particularly interesting to note that the old linen pattern flanks the fireplace below.

Lord Sandys, the builder of The Vyne, was a



THE STAIRCASE.

soldier, who, in consideration of his good service in Spain, Guienne, Flanders, and Picardy, was made Treasurer of Calais in 1517. He was raised to the dignity of a Knight of the Garter, and the high consideration in which he was held caused him to

him at The Vyne in 1513, and was there again in 1531. As Lord Chancellor, Sandys took part in the public reception of Anne Boleyn; but there is reason to believe, although she was with the King at his house, that he resented the turn affairs had



PANELLING IN THE LONG GALLERY.

be selected as one of the commissioners for the famous interview between Henry and Francis I., known as the Field of the Cloth of Gold. He was created Baron Sandys of The Vyne, and became Lord Chancellor in 1526. The King had visited

taken. In Shakespeare's "King Henry VIII." he speaks of himself thus :

"An honest country lord, as I am, beaten
A long time out of play, may bring his plain-song,
And have an hour of hearing."



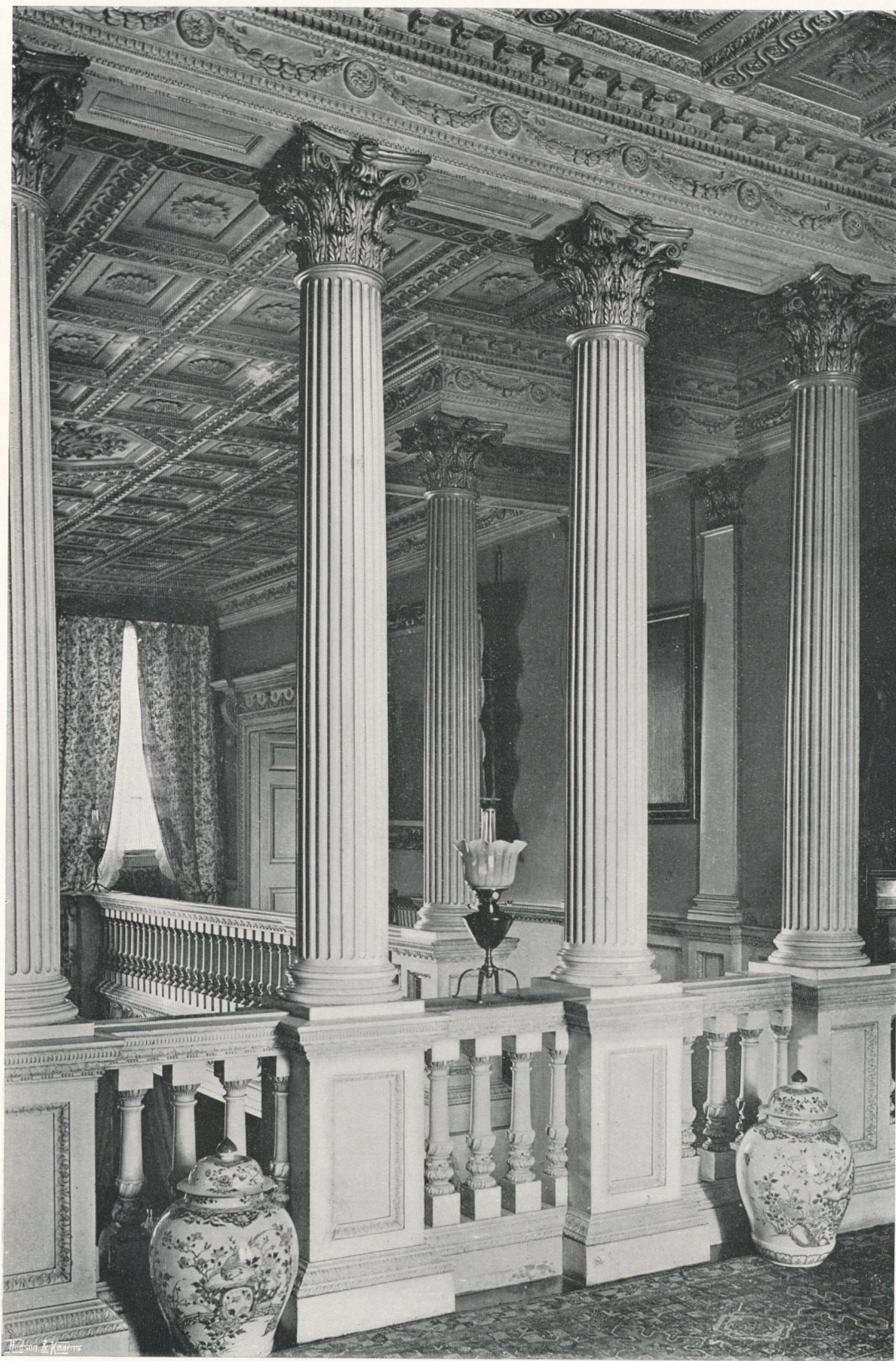
THE TAPESTRY-ROOM.

After the divorce of Catherine of Aragon and the religious upheaval that followed, Sandys withdrew from the Court and lived in retirement. Henry, however, was not alienated, and with his new wife went to The Vyne in October, 1535; and on the outbreak in the North, Sandys appeared at the Privy Council. Upon his death, he was buried in the chapel of the Holy

and plate were sent to The Vyne from the Tower and Hampton Court to enable Sandys to entertain the Frenchmen worthily, while the neighbouring gentlemen lent seven score of beds and much furniture. The Queen was installed at Basing House, the Marquess of Winchester's place, but spent much time at The Vyne.

Henry Lord Sandys, an ardent Royalist in the Civil War, was mortally wounded in a fight at Bramdean, near Alresford, and died in April, 1644. Meanwhile, in the preceding November, Sir William Waller had installed his troopers at The Vyne, when Sir Ralph Hopton was attempting to relieve Basing House, then heavily besieged. Misfortunes and impoverishment overtook the house of Sandys, and William, the next lord, with broken fortunes, sold the manor, and on his death in 1688 the barony fell into abeyance.

The purchaser was Chaloner Chute, an eminent lawyer in his time, who had been very successful at the Bar, and was Treasurer of the Middle Temple in 1639. He twice represented Middlesex in Parliament, and was elected Speaker of the House of Commons in 1659. The French Ambassador described him as "one of the most celebrated lawyers in the nation," and Sir Arthur Hazelrigg looked upon him as "the greatest man in England." He died in April, 1659, as his monument at The Vyne says, "in the service of his arduous post, to the regret of all parties." This monument, which is in the Tomb Chamber, is one of the best works of Thomas Banks, R.A., and was erected later by John Chute, the friend of Walpole. The Speaker effected great alterations at



THE ENTRANCE HALL GALLERY.

Ghost at Basingstoke, which he had greatly adorned.

His house passed to three of his descendants in succession, and his grandson William, the third lord, was visited by Elizabeth in 1569 and 1601. The Duke de Biron, Ambassador of Henry IV., came to The Vyne to discuss with Elizabeth the designs of the House of Austria, having with him nearly 400 gentlemen and attendants, and hangings

The Vyne. He removed the base court, built the Grecian portico, and substituted sashes for the mullioned windows. His architect was John Webb, the pupil and executor, and connection by birth and marriage, of Inigo Jones, and the old brickwork of the time is excellent.

Mr. John Chute, who succeeded to the estate on the death of his brother Anthony in 1754, was a man of cultivated intellect and refined taste, who

did a very great deal to embellish The Vyne, and added to it statuary and various works of art. Living at the Casa Ambrosio in Florence, the house of Sir Horace Mann, the British Minister, he met, in 1740, Horace Walpole and Gray. The acquaintance ripened into intimacy and friendship, and Chute is constantly referred to in Walpole's letters. Walpole greatly admired him, and wrote to Mann, in October, 1747: "If I were to say all I think of Chute's immense honesty, his sense, his worth, his knowledge, and his humanity, you would think I was writing a dedication."

Walpole was frequently at The Vyne, and took much interest in the work going on there.

He presented to Mr. Chute, about 1745, the two stone eagles which now flank the entrance; and the friends often resorted to the beautiful old summer-house, which they used as a Temple of the Muses. It would appear that the magnificent Corinthian staircase, with the elegant fluted columns, the balustrade, and the richly-adorned ceiling, all admirably proportioned, which Mr. Chute himself designed, was carried on with the advice of Walpole, although it was somewhat alien to his taste. He constantly suggested embellishments for the house and garden, and for the addition of sculpture and paintings. The brilliant letter-writer seemed, indeed, to have had some sense of proprietorship, and was rather irritated at his friend's hesitation to carry out certain of his suggestions. He intensely admired the Tudor Chapel, and frequently alludes to it. In his "Anecdotes of Painting," he refers to the principal work of his friend as "the theatric staircase designed and just erected by John Chute," but, in a manuscript description of the house, he speaks of Chute as "an able geometrician, and an exquisite architect, both in the Grecian and Gothic style," and says, "he erected from his own design the beautiful scenery of the staircase with its two vestibules." Chute never married, and died at The Vyne in May, 1776.

On his death the estate passed by will to his cousin Thomas Lobb, who assumed the name of Chute, and the latter's son, William John Chute, succeeded to The Vyne in 1790. He was a man

of mark, whose name is honoured in his shire, his chief distinction being that he maintained, until his death in 1824, at his own cost, the well-known pack of the Vyne Hounds. He was an ardent sportsman, kept both horses and hounds, and at The Vyne may still be seen a portrait of New Forest Jasper, one of the sires of the pack. Mr. Chute used to say, "as distinguished families had the portraits of their distinguished ancestor, the judge, or the general, or the statesman, in their rooms, he did not see why dogs should not have their family pictures also." The Duke of Wellington, when he went to Strathfieldsaye, was a well-known member of the Hunt. Mr. Chute was not, however,

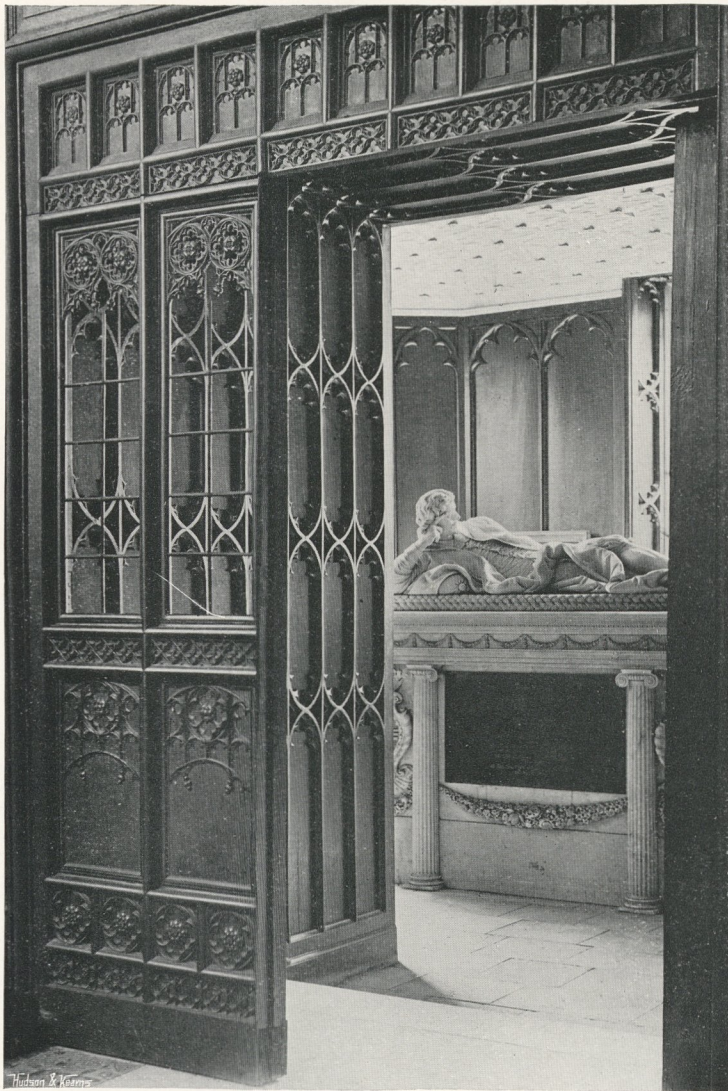
merely a fox-hunting squire. He represented his county in Parliament, and was a man of marked individuality and independence of character.

Neither he nor his brother ever married, and the estate passed by will to William Lyde Wiggett, a cousin of their mother, who assumed the name and arms of Chute. This gentleman enlarged the old mansion, and enriched it with some valuable works of art. His son, Mr. Chaloner W. Chute, a gentleman of great attainments, did good service by writing an account of his historic home, from which some of these notes are derived.

In recounting the history of the house, it has been partly described under the periods of its erection, and not much remains to be said.

Originally, on the right

of the entrance hall, according to the ancient manner of building, was a large dining-hall, and there was a private dining-chamber for Lord Sandys and his family and friends. On the left of the hall is the Print Room, so called from prints hung there about the year 1815. Beyond this is the Strawberry Parlour, with oak paneling, thus named in honour of Horace Walpole. The Stone Gallery on the west side, under the long Oak Gallery, is also a notable apartment, and contains several fine portraits, and many Roman remains and busts. Over the mantel, in relation to the conjectured origin of the name of the house, is a medallion of the Emperor Probus, who is said to have introduced vine-growing into this country. The gallery leads



THE CHAPEL AND THE TOMB.

into the West Drawing Room, and beyond is the oak-panelled Dining Room, once called the Starred Parlour, from being painted blue with gilt bosses. From this apartment we enter the Chapel Parlour, richly wainscoted, and having an old marble fireplace with the date 1691. Then we reach the Ante-Chapel, with ancient heraldic glass, the splendid old Chapel, and the Tomb Chamber, with the notable recumbent figure of Speaker Chute, placed there by Mr. John Chute.

Other rooms upstairs are the Queen's Lying Chamber, so named because Anne Boleyn is said to have occupied it; the King's Chamber, My Lady's Closet, the Library, the Tapestry Room, and the Long Gallery. Enough has been said to show that architecturally and by reason of its internal plenishings, and even more because of its historic and personal interests, The Vyne must take its place among the most notable houses in England.

GROOMBRIDGE PLACE, KENT.

GROOMBRIDGE PLACE, that beautiful and attractive Kentish house, remarkable alike in historical interests, the radiant beauty of its gardens, and the variety of its internal features, is situated near Tunbridge Wells, close to the Sussex border. We shall traverse very briefly the fruitful field of its history, which, however, we cannot neglect, because the associations of the house should add a great deal to the interest of the pictures illustrating its interior.

We must know something of the men who dwelt therein. After passing through the hands of the powerful families of Cobham and Clinton, Groombridge passed by sale to the Wallers of Lamberhurst, who were a race of great renown in Kent and Sussex, and the buttressed walls of the garden belong to their time, as does some of

the oak panelling. The most famous member of this old Kentish family was that Sir Richard who fought so valiantly at Agincourt, and there took prisoner the Duke of Orleans, whom he held captive for more than twenty years at Groombridge. Waller was a man of high credit, who afterwards served under the Duke of Bedford, and had custody of the Count of Angoulême, Orleans' brother, in 1437. Fresh interest was thus added to Groombridge, and the memory of those transactions is preserved about the house, where the fleur de lys of France may be observed, and has been added as an adornment to the garden gates. Waller rose higher and higher in the Royal estimation, and, having acted prominently against Jack Cade, was made receiver of the Royal Castles and manors in Kent, Surrey, Sussex, and Hants.



GROOMBRIDGE PLACE.