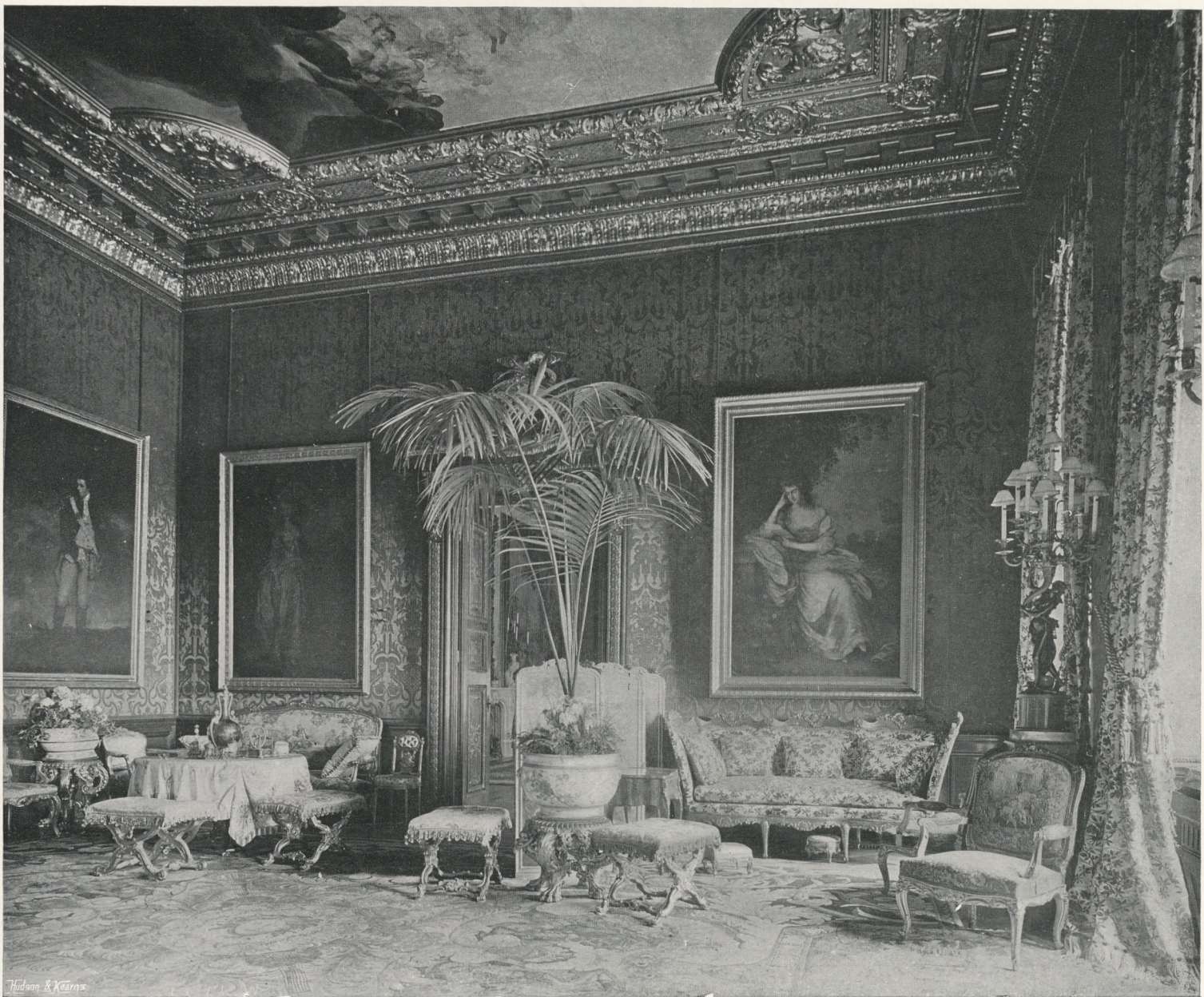


WADDESDON MANOR, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

THIS beautiful house was entirely the creation of one very gifted man, the late Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, singularly equipped with inherited and acquired judgment in matters of art, who caused it to be built in the style in which his matured taste found most satisfaction. He has left recorded in his private notes what may be called the personal story of the building of the house, setting out in simple and reflective style the pleasures and pains, the successes and disappointments, of this unique addition to the domestic architecture of England. It was a journey through Touraine, made many years before with his sister, the present mistress of Waddesdon, Miss Alice de Rothschild, which made him resolve that if ever

he did build a house, it should be one in the style of the French Renaissance. In that splendid old province the châteaux of France left by Renaissance exceed in size, richness of fancy, and general splendour of design those of any other part of the Continent. It was also, perhaps, a determining factor in his choice that it was for the interiors and decoration of such houses that the masterpieces of French art which he possessed in great number, and particularly prized, were designed—not only pictures, but porcelain, furniture, mirrors, and other objects, which the creation of a French Renaissance château would, with care, place again in their proper surroundings. He did not intend to rival the Touraine houses in size, though by



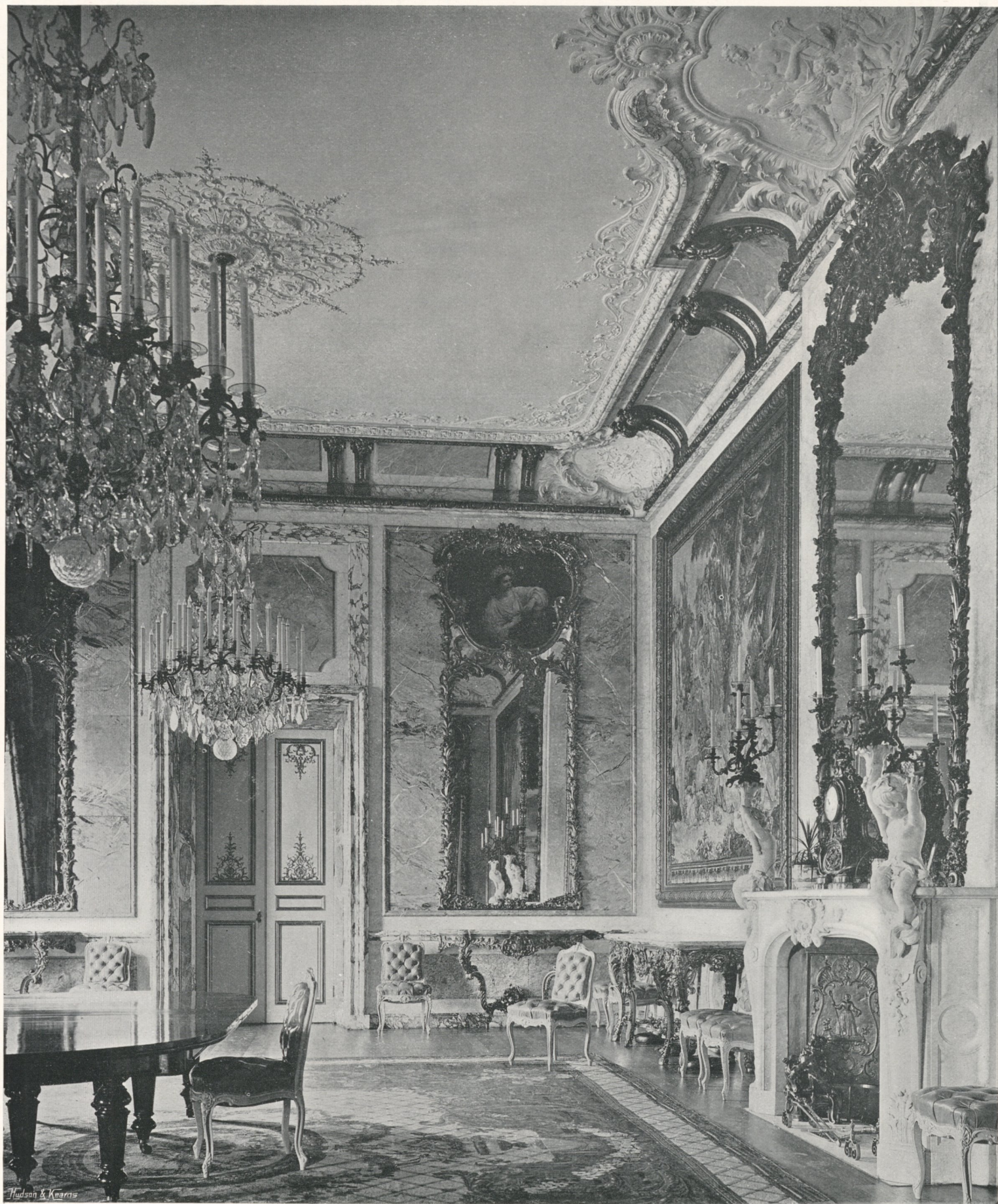
THE RED DRAWING-ROOM.

our standards Waddesdon would be judged a very large place. "Chambord," he notes, "has 450 rooms. Waddesdon is a pigmy beside it." His architect stated that in his experience people always began by building too small, and this Baron Ferdinand found to be the case.

In 1874 Baron Ferdinand bought from the Duke of Marlborough 2,700 acres, to which he added 500 more, about five miles from Aylesbury, on some rather steep hills, with wide views over the pleasing stretch of scenery—woods, hills, valleys, and meadows—of that part of Bucking-

hamshire. Except for its height and the view, the ground had few natural attractions. There was no house, and where now there are pools, lawns, trees, and cascades on the hill, and a nicely-wooded park below, there was "not a bird or a bush." The top of the hill had to be taken off and levelled, roads made to the summit, and water brought from fourteen miles away in the Chilterns.

Having chosen the French style, Baron Ferdinand went to Paris to find an architect, judging that French architects have more



THE DINING-ROOM.

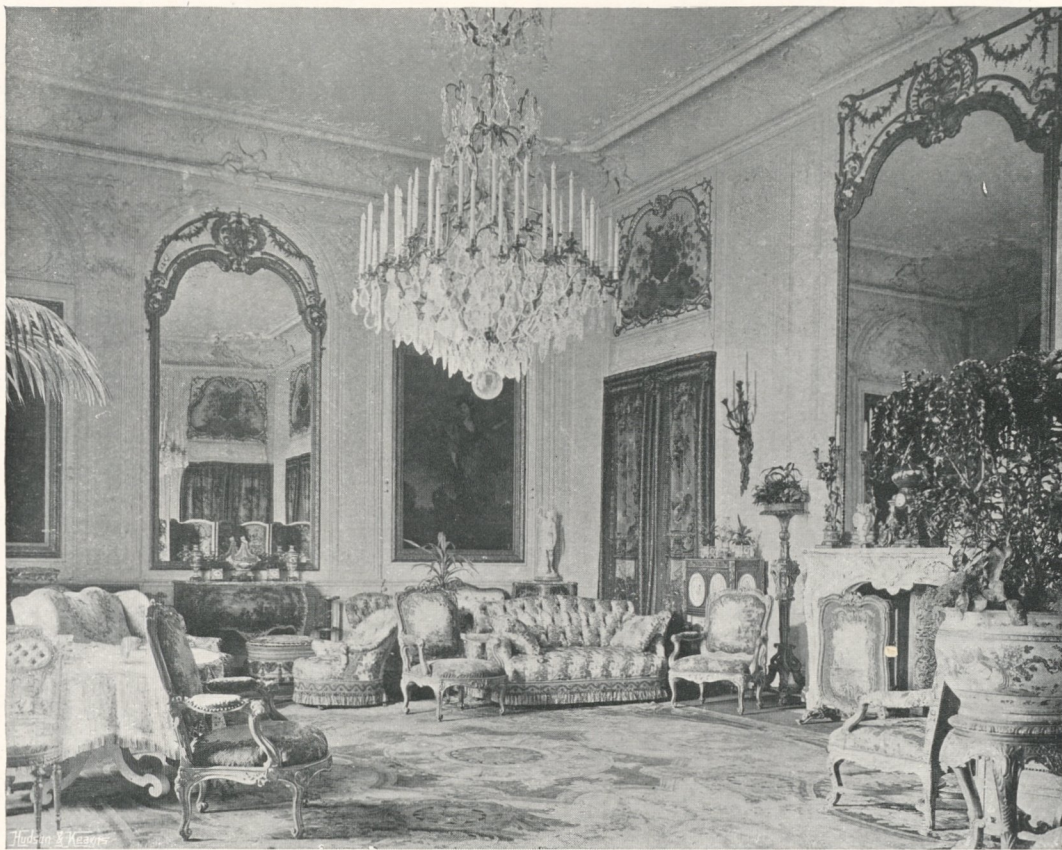


THE FRENCH GALLERY.

practice in this class of building, and more of the "feeling" for it than others. He selected M. Détailler, who came of a race of architects. His father and grandfather had been architects for the Duke of Orleans, and he had won fame by the intelligent and successful restoration of the Duc de Mouchy's house. M. Détailler was a man of great talent, sometimes rising to genius. In Waddesdon, however, we do not see an entirely new creation. Its towers are those of Maintenon, the château of the Duc de Noailles, and the great outside round stair tower is designed

from that at Blois, though at Blois the windows are not glazed. The general result is very impressive and attractive.

But the interior of Waddesdon is its greatest claim to admiration. It is a liberal education in almost every branch of art, and the objects are all masterpieces of their kind; but, more than that, all of these, instead of standing isolated as in a museum, are in relation to the whole idea of each chamber. The colour scheme in many of these rooms is so subtle that it is difficult to distinguish the parts which make up the



THE GREY DRAWING-ROOM.



THE BILLIARD-ROOM CHIMNEY-PIECE.

whole. In other rooms the tone is far more bold and decisive, and the impression is frankly one of strong colour, relieved by a free use of brilliant lustres, very richly mounted ormolu furniture, mirrors, and cabinets. There is no fear of brilliant colour; it is an eminently cheerful and inspiring interior. The best guide to the appearance of the various rooms is in the pictures here shown. A minute description of the "pieces" in each would be rather in the style of a catalogue at a great sale at Christie's, and, besides, would give a wrong impression, because, as we have said, and as will strike everyone who has seen these galleries and chambers, everything in them goes together, and it is not till you have enjoyed the pleasure of the general effect that you begin to examine the parts. But an endeavour will be made here to add some particulars as to the colour and the principal objects shown. As a rule only about a quarter of the room is seen in the picture, which, though correct in detail, is necessarily only a "sample"; and, alas! neither description nor photograph can convey an idea of the wonderful colour effects given by the whole. As you enter some of these rooms you are sensible of almost nothing but the colour, which cannot be described. The permanent decorations, such as the panelling, ceilings, chimney-pieces, and doors, are not from the designs of M. Détailler. They are chiefly taken from old French houses. If only the panelling of the French house was brought here, the ceiling was copied.

In the French Gallery the fittings, furniture, and panelling are Louis XIV. in style, with a good deal of ormolu and white marble. The mantel-pieces and the

tall flat arch in which is set the mirror are of white marble, with slight ornamentation of gilded bronze. The carpets and curtains are bright red, the windows large, and the details very beautiful. This apartment forms part of a series of galleries running the length of the house, from which the principal rooms are approached, the different galleries being separated by glass doors, which keep out draughts, but allow the vista to be seen.

The Morning Room, if we take it as the first of the separate chambers, is an exquisite example of the style of the others, though there are differences in them. The architecture and the proportions of the room are seen in the picture. The two large and exquisite lustre chandeliers show that the length of the room is greater than the foreshortening suggests. Great lustres are among the favourite means for giving brightness and light to the Waddesdon rooms, and they are very fine examples. It will be noticed that, as in the French Gallery and other rooms, the material of the mantel-piece is carried up in an arched panel with flat pilasters, and holds here a picture, and in others a mirror. The general scheme of colour in this room is soft greenish grey, but the marble is flushed with warmer colour. Between its pilasters is set Sir Joshua Reynolds's "Thais," leading the way with her torch to burn Darius's palace. The other pictures are by Gerard Douw, Cuyp, Wouvermann, Gainsborough, and Sir Joshua again. The clock seen at the end has a history, like most things at Waddesdon. It came from Lord Fitzwilliam's house at Malton, and later belonged to Lord Rockingham. It is said to have been given to one of the Earls Fitzwilliam by Mme. de Maintenon. There is a wonderful marquetry table in this room, matching a bureau made for Louis XV., now in the Louvre, and showing the King's monogram.

Ascending the winding staircase in the Blois tower and entering the Grey Drawing Room, one finds a scheme of ornament rather less complex. The walls are pale grey; note, too, the fewness of the objects upon them, and their distances and proportion—at the end a single mirror, flanked by a splendid single-figure picture on either side by Sir Joshua Reynolds. At the end from which the photograph is taken is a third picture by the same painter. They are Lady Jane Halliday, with her hair blowing about,

a characteristic "Sir Joshua lady, the Duchess of Cumberland, and Mrs. Abingdon. The mantel-piece in this room is most beautiful. It is of whitish marble, with soft pink splashes in it; and the two vases, one of which can be seen between the candelabrum and the clock, are of the famous Rose du Barri pink set with a golden border.

The Picture Gallery and the Tower Room are rich and charming. Porphyry vases and Dresden china are in the former, and the extraordinary jewelled elephant clock, designed for the Shah, is in the latter. Baron Ferdinand's



THE MORNING ROOM.

Room has a special interest. It contains some of the best English pictures ever painted, and some of the finest furniture ever made.

Among the pictures, those by Romney of Mrs. Jordan as a "Country Girl" and by Sir Joshua Reynolds of Mrs. Sheridan are the most striking. The former was purchased by Baron Ferdinand from Lady FitzClarence, who married Mrs. Jordan's son. The "Mrs. Sheridan" has a history singularly charming in reference to the character of the great Master who painted it. Sheridan ordered the picture, but for a long time did not claim it, as he was not in a position to pay for it. Meantime, many offers to

purchase it were made, but all these Sir Joshua declined, and kept the picture until he should hear from Sheridan. After some years, the latter wrote to ask for the picture and to enquire what he was to pay for it. Sir Joshua told him that he thought the painting his very best—as for the price, “in the common course of business” it would have been £500, but he should only ask of Sheridan £150. In this room is the wonderful bureau purchased from the Duke of Buccleugh.

As any visitor who sees the splendid interior will probably form some opinion as to which room impresses him most, the following notes as to the Great Dining Room may serve as an example of such a possible preference. The effect of colour in this room is simply splendid, and the harmony such that it is most difficult to pick out its constituent parts. The walls are mainly greyish marble with warm splashes of pink.

The carpet is an antique, of grey, gold, and pale reds. Above the mirrors at either end are two panels with idealised portraits, exquisitely rich in colour, from the Hotel de Villars, built for the Count of Toulouse in the reign of Louis XIV. At either side of the great mirror above the mantel-piece is a panel of tapestry from subjects painted by Boucher; the tapestries are the genuine old ones bearing his name—the original oil pictures belonged to Lord Tweedmouth. The effect is purely decorative, the ground being mainly a pearly grey, the trees various soft blues, the other parts pink, or pale red or drab, or opal or peach colour, but with here and there the most wonderful quiet glows and flushes of brilliant ruby and carmine, all held in reserve as it were, but astonishingly beautiful. The chairs, it may be noticed, are all white, with plain drab leather covers, so as to interfere in no way with the general harmony of this exquisite room.



WADDESDON MANOR.