

RUSHBROOKE HALL, SUFFOLK.

MANY are the great houses and beautiful estates that adorn, with the aspect of ancient greatness and present-day prosperity, the Eastern Counties of England. There is a beauty and character in them that is all their own. Individuality is in their features, in their fretted walls of old brick, their terra-cotta cuspings, friezes, and chimneys, the stately manner in which they rise in the level land, reflected not seldom in the mirrors of their ancient moats; quadrangular they are sometimes, often with a centre and advancing wings; frequently they are perfect, but also not rarely to be found in decay. Some have inevitably tended downward, and the winds and rains have struggled for centuries with their sturdy bulk for the mastery. Purple and green and grey rise the walls of these veterans, when the sun lengthens their shadows. Others there are, and these are numerous, which maintain the old architectural credit of East Anglia, existing with their gardens in the radiance of good and seemly times, preserved with fitting care by their possessors, and treasured as their old fame and pictorial domestic beauty deserve to be treasured. There are some, like that we depict, which have passed through transforming hands, and that present the attractions of varied character to the eye.

Even in a county which possesses such splendid houses as Melford, Hengrave, and Helmingham, Rushbrooke Hall may lay claim to very high distinction. The place stands about three miles south-east of Bury St. Edmunds, upon something of an eminence, in a beautifully wooded park of 150 acres. Anciently the site was a possession of the great Abbey which was its neighbour. Under Abbot Sampson the Abbey lands had been extended, and many were those who had tenure of its lordships—among them a certain Scotland de Rushbrooke. In the year 1180 he held under Abbot Sampson, and from his family the place passed through an heiress to the Jermyns, builders of the existing house, who came to be men of note in their time. It has been stated that the east wing of the open quadrangle, which faces the south, goes back to the time of John, and there is no reason to doubt that a house stood on the site in the days of that truculent king, of which some fragments may possibly exist in the foundations of the noble moated structure at Rushbrooke. Obviously great changes have passed over the place, and

it has the infinite charm of marking the influence of new tastes and the spirit of various times. Those long ranges of windows, inserted in the old and mellow brick, are not of the date of the cupola-crowned turrets, the beautiful grille, with its stone supports, its vases and acorn caps, is not contemporary with the moat that it margins.

The Jermyns were seated here about five hundred years. John Jermyn was Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in the reign of Henry VI., and many of his successors, including Sir Ambrose Jermyn and Sir Robert Jermyn, held the same office for one or both counties. Sir Robert was living at Rushbrooke in the reign of Elizabeth, and took part in the high festivities which attended her visit to East Anglia in 1577. A room in the house has been shown as that in which she held her court, but in regard to this matter an attitude of doubt is perhaps becoming.

Sir Thomas Jermyn, K.B., of Rushbrooke, was Comptroller of the Royal Household and Privy Councillor to Charles I., and of his two sons by Catherine, daughter of Sir William Killebrew, the younger, Henry, became both notable and notorious. He was a courtier and a pliant and plausible diplomatist, who rendered much service to the Royal cause during his sojourn in France, won honours as his reward, and found unkindly critics of his actions and of himself. In 1639 he was Vice-Chamberlain and Master of the Horse to Queen Henrietta Maria, and rose, by his courtly arts, high in Her Majesty's favour, occupying himself in the affairs of the State, but giving up his life not seldom to pleasure. He represented Corfe Castle in the Short Parliament of 1640, and Bury St. Edmunds in the Long Parliament. Concerned in the Army Plot of 1641 to overawe the Commons by military force, which he and Goring set on foot, it required all his astuteness to escape the penalty, and he fled to France. He returned in 1643, and was appointed colonel of the Queen's Royal Horse Guards. He commanded the little army which escorted her to Oxford, but was more at home in the Court than in the field. In the same year he was raised to the peerage as Baron Jermyn of St. Edmundsbury, as a reward for his zeal in the Royal cause, and became useful in political missions because of his freedom from scruple and even from principle. This was what his enemies said, and it was a chief point in the Roundhead indictment of him that his

correspondence revealed the Royal purpose of employing foreign aid to establish the English crown more securely. Lord Jermyn became prominent in many affairs. He intrigued, in 1648, to obtain command of the Fleet, though

he went through the form of marriage with the Queen. Pepys describes him in his old age: "Dining at my Lord Chamberlain's, met my Lord of St. Albans, now grown so blind that he could not see to take his meat. He has lived



THE ENTRANCE TO RUSHBROOKE HALL.

knowing nothing about it, and aspired to be Lord High Admiral. At the Restoration, when he was created Earl of St. Albans, his power rested upon the favour of the Queen-Mother and the favour of the French Court, and scandal says that

a most easy life, in plenty, even abroad, whilst his Majesty was a sufferer. He has lost immense sums at play, which yet, at about eighty years old, he continues, having one that sits by him to name the spots on the cards. He ate and drank



THE STAIRWAY.



THE CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE HALL.

with extraordinary appetite. He is a prudent old courtier, and much enriched since his Majesty's return." He died in 1684, and is buried in Rushbrooke church beneath a marble monument.

Lord St. Albans' elder brother, Thomas Jermyn, had possession of Rushbrooke Hall, and was followed there by his son Thomas, who succeeded to the barony of Jermyn by special remainder at the death of his uncle. His brother Henry was created Lord Dover, and was the "petit Jermyn" so ludicrously described by the Comte de Grammont. Thomas, Lord Jermyn, had an only son Thomas, who was in the Navy, and was killed at the age of sixteen on board ship by the fall of a mast. The boy's five sisters then became co-heiresses, and with Mary, the eldest of them, Rushbrooke passed to her husband, Sir Robert Davers, who represented Suffolk in Parliament in the time of Queen Anne and George I. His son, Sir Jermyn Davers, also represented the county in Parliament. Rushbrooke remained with that family until the death of Sir Charles Davers, third and last baronet, in 1806, and then passed by amicable arrangement to Colonel Robert Rushbrooke, grandfather of the present owner, a descendant of the ancient possessors of Rushbrooke, who had taken their name from the place. Frederick William, Earl of Bristol, had succeeded to the estate as heir-general of the Davers family, his father having married the sister and heiress of Sir Charles Davers, but an agreement was entered into with Colonel Rushbrooke, who had married Frances Davers, whereby Rushbrooke was transferred to him in exchange for his estate at Little Saxham, which was conveyed to Lord Bristol. Colonel Rushbrooke was J.P. and D.L. of the county, and represented the Western Division in Parliament.

A very quaint, beautiful, and attractive exterior has Rushbrooke Hall. Its east wing is conjectured to have been built by Thomas Jermyn who died in 1504, and the main block by Sir Robert Jermyn about 1597. The Tudor windows were probably changed to their present form by Sir Jermyn Davers, who added the north front about 1735, and it is thought the internal features of the Great Hall assumed their present character in his time. The octagonal turrets at the corners of the wings are of a type familiar to those who know the old houses of this part of England. Singularly attractive is the forecourt, with its old sundial, overshadowed by the antique walls of the

quadrangle. The entrance porch of stone is delightful in its solidity and symmetry, its semi-circular arch and pillars, its achievement of the arms of the Rushbrookes, its clock and its pediment, all with the pleasant classic aspect of the English Renaissance. Its stone frontage affords a pleasing contrast to the red brick of the house itself, and gives variety both in style and hue. The dormers of the centre and the wings present an attractive outline. An old wall, having beautiful sculptured flower-vases on its crest, gives a terrace-like margin to the forecourt, outside of which is the broad mirror of the moat, now spanned by a bridge of two arches, making a passage-way to the park. The house, though lying open on one side, is completed as a quadrangle by the moat and its enclosures, and on the far side, between the house and the park, runs a simple iron grille, distinguished at intervals by the vase-crowned pillars, which have a quaint and original character. The effect of the whole structure is very attractive, and in the pleasant colours of its old brick, and the variety of its architectural features, Rushbrooke is truly beautiful. It is also particularly interesting, owing to its associations with the long line of the Jermyns, its possession by the family of Davers, whose members did much to adorn it, and its return to a descendant of the ancient possessors of the lordship.

Not the least interesting feature of the interior of the house is the large collection of family portraits, many of them by famous masters. The noble hall and stairway are lined with them, and they include portraits of the owners, from Edmund Jermyn, who died in 1573, to Sir Robert Davers, who died in 1763. Our illustration will show how charming is the general effect of the old interior, with the handsome and unusual balustrade. There is a portrait of the famous Earl of St. Albans by Van Dyck, and a fine full-length by Lely represents him in his robes. Another Lely is of Catherine of Braganza, Queen of Charles II., seated in a shell chair. From the easel of Van Dyck also are half-lengths of Lord Hopton and his son, and there are other examples of Lely and later masters, and the families of Jermyn and Davers are well represented. Beautiful marble in carved fireplaces and door frames, admirable enrichments in wood, wonderful work in plaster, glorious furniture and plenishings complete the charm of Rushbrooke Hall.