

BURTON AGNES, YORKSHIRE.

BURTON AGNES, the ancient home of the Boyntons, is one of the most beautiful Tudor and Jacobean houses in Yorkshire, and, indeed, almost in England. It has features that are uncommon, and to the practised eye betrays the influence of locality in its architecture. It is more richly embellished by the craft of the carver in wood, stone, and marble than almost any other house that one is acquainted with. Lying in a pleasant country between Driffield and Bridlington, it is surrounded by woodland, and, standing upon a slight eminence, commands a view over the lower country of Holderness, while behind it are the level edges of the Wolds, where the chalk rises from below the drift to reach out its length to the white cliffs of Flamborough.

The place came to the Boyntons through the marriage of Sir Matthew Boynton of Barmston with the daughter of Sir Henry Griffith of Burton Agnes, the lady being eleventh in descent in the female line from King Edward I., and eventually sole heiress of the Burton Agnes property. Shortly after the Conquest the Boyntons took their name from a place near Bridlington, and they came into possession of Barmston in the fifteenth century. Sir Matthew Boynton, who was a man of note in his shire, was knighted at Whitehall on May 6th, 1618, and within a week was raised to the baronetage. He represented Heydon in Parliament, and afterwards Scarborough, and was Sheriff in 1628-29, and again from 1643 to 1645. Taking sides with the Parliament, he assisted in the capture of Sir John Hotham,



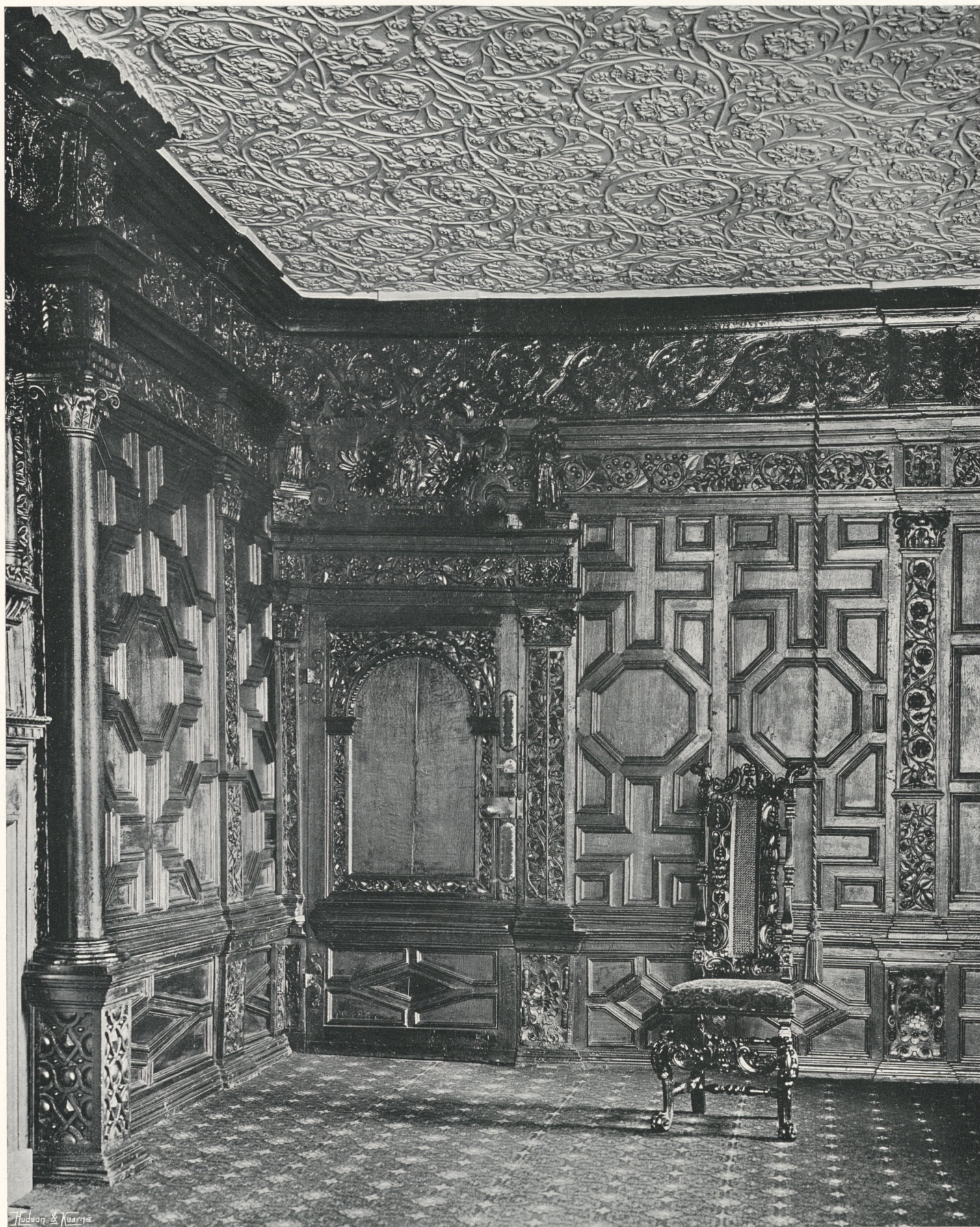
THE GATE-HOUSE.

who had planned to surrender Hull to the King. His son, Sir Francis Boynton of Barmston, succeeded to Burton Agnes, in February, 1654, on the death of his maternal uncle, Sir Henry Griffith, and from that time forward successive baronets of the family lived on their paternal estates, sometimes representing neighbouring constituencies in Parliament, often acting as High Sheriffs, and being almost invariably Justices of the Peace. Sir Griffith Boynton, the third baronet, born in 1654, greatly improved the

mansion house of Burton Agnes, which had been built by Sir Walter Griffith between 1600 and 1603, and traces of his work may yet be found. The late baronet, Sir Henry, was very popular in the shire, and took a prominent part in all local affairs. Sir Griffith Boynton, the present and twelfth baronet, has his residence at Barmston. Sir Henry left his property to his only daughter, Miss Cycely M. Boynton, who married Mr. Thomas Lamplugh Wickham in 1899, that gentleman assuming the additional name of Boynton.



THE HALL AND STAIRWAY.



A CORNER IN THE OAK ROOM.

It has been persistently asserted that Inigo Jones was concerned in altering the plans and in making additions to the house before the Boyntons were in possession, but there appears to be no real evidence of the fact. Certainly, the gate-house, with its four octagonal turrets, its cupolas, and all its picturesque quaintness, would be worthy of him, and there is something in the rather unusual entrance to the house, with its Ionic and Corinthian columns, and its achievements of arms, that

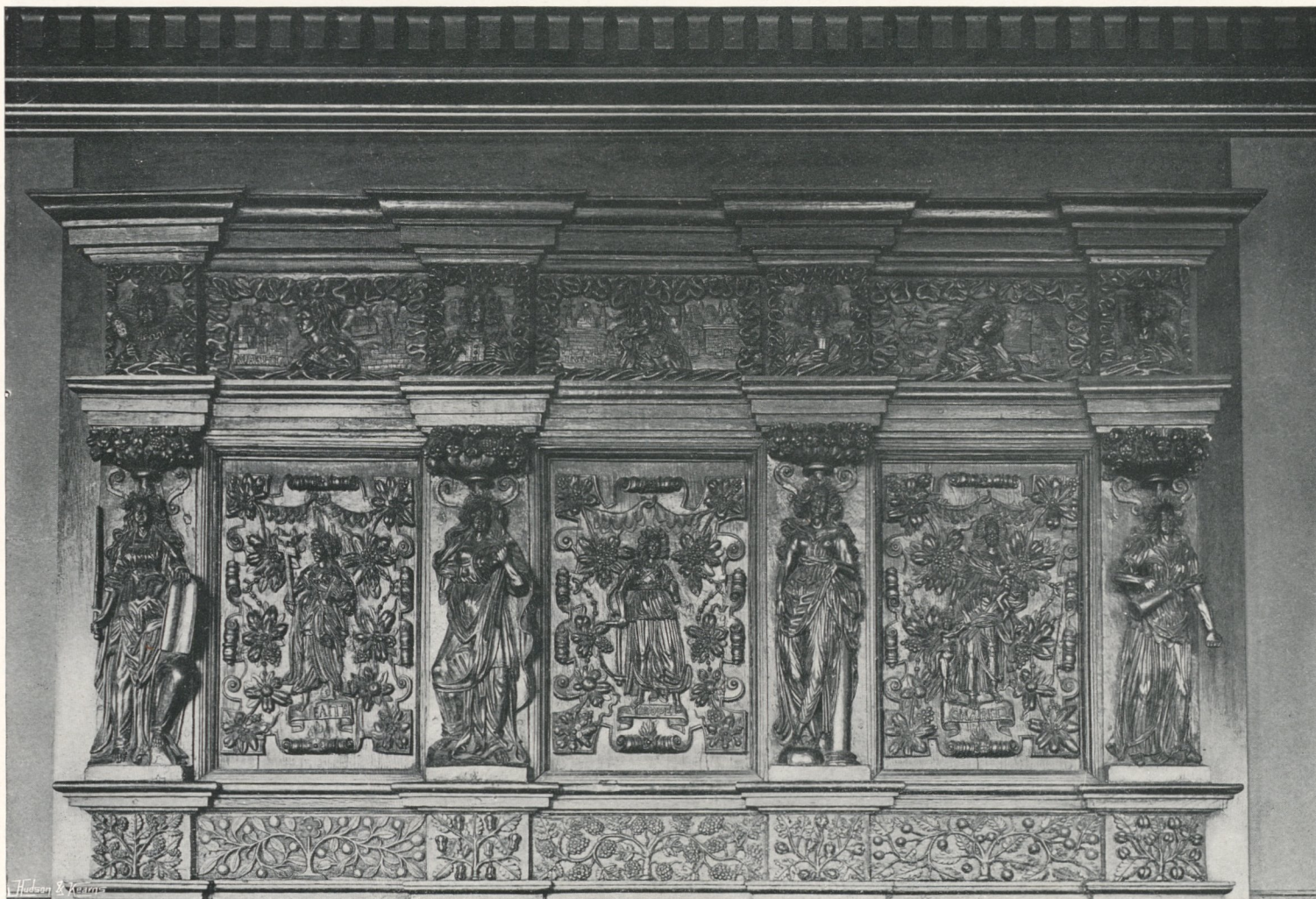
bespeaks the care of some master-hand in architecture. The true note of the place is struck when we set foot in the entrance hall, and find a richness of carving and an elaboration of effect which are quite unusual. The chimney-piece of stone and marble is a truly wonderful work. Coupled Ionic columns, covered with floral arabesques, and a bracket in the middle of the mantel, support a very elaborately carved panel, which represents the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. It would almost appear that some foreign hand had



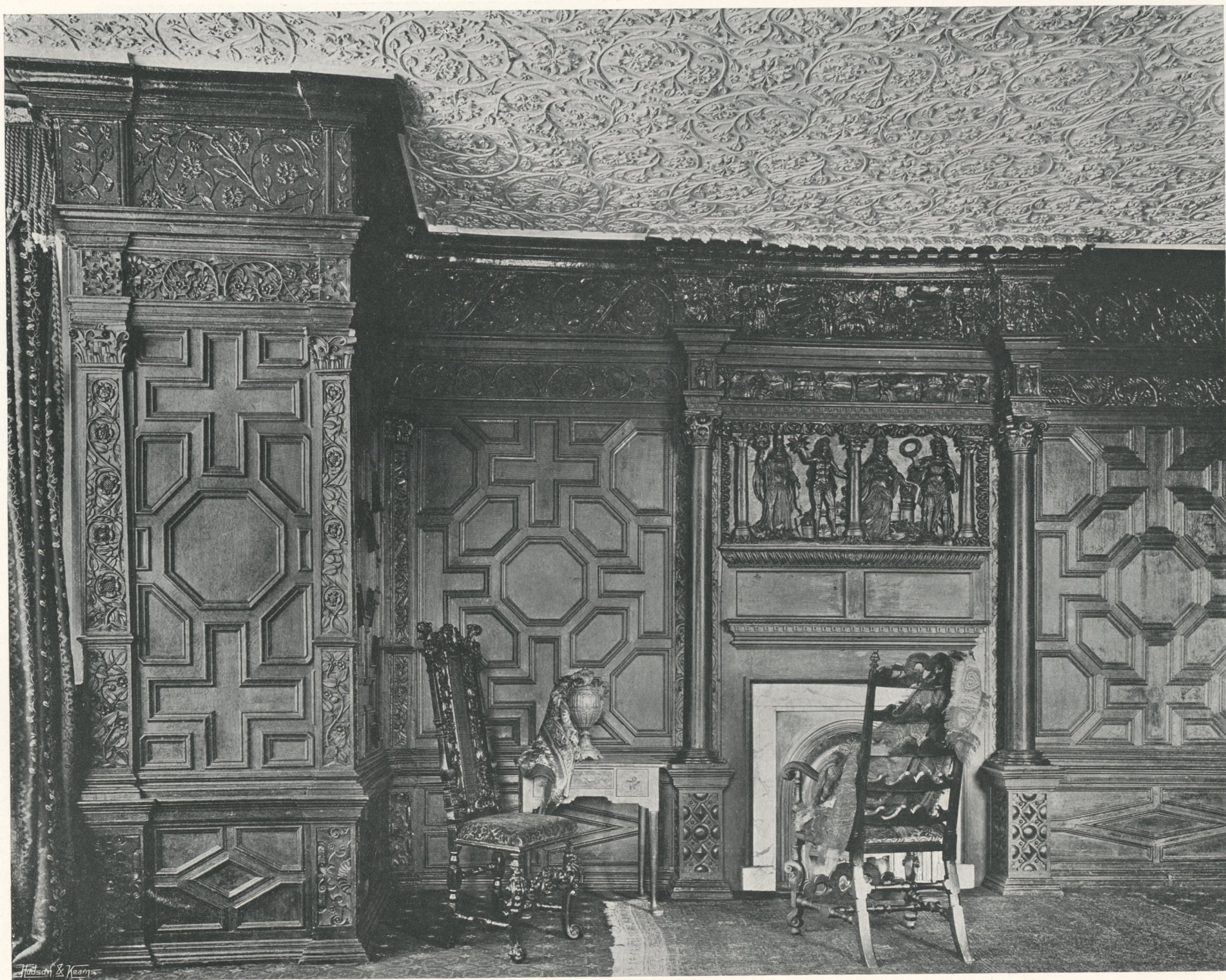
THE DANCE OF DEATH.

been at work here. Above this curious carving are three armorial panels, with caryatid figures between them, the whole of the work being of exceeding richness. A pediment completes the design, with the arms and quarterings of the Boyntons on a shield in the middle. The panelling of the room is very beautiful, and most elaborately worked, and the round-headed arches add to the appearance of richness. Here, also, is

a noble screen of oak, which was brought from Barmston Hall, and yet seems in no wise inappropriate to Burton Agnes. There are two round-arched doorways, and above them an entablature, supported by six coupled Ionic columns. Most quaintly sculptured in the panels of the next range are the four evangelists, with symbolical figures, and like features complete the design above. The effect of the cream colour with



THE CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE DINING-ROOM.



DETAILS OF THE CARVING AND PLASTER-WORK IN THE OAK ROOM.



THE CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE HALL.

which this remarkable piece of work has been painted, is certainly remarkable, and there may well be diverse opinions concerning it; likewise as to the practice of varnishing carved oak panelling as at Burton Agnes. Still another strange carving, now in the hall, but brought from the drawing-room, is a very curious Dance of Death, carved out of one solid block of oak,

about 8ft. long and 5ft. wide, the ancient legend being curiously represented in a very elaborate manner, which seems to betray a foreign origin.

We may now ascend the noble stairway, passing beneath a semi-circular arch, supported by pilasters very much enriched, and having curious figures above on either side of the spandrels rising to the architrave. Double rows

of pillars add to the elaboration of the ascent, and give the approach to the upper rooms a very attractive appearance. This quaint staircase brings the visitor to the Gallery, which has a very old-world aspect, with its carved roof designed to imitate a trellis-work of intertwined roses and creepers. From the windows remarkably fine views of the surrounding country are obtained. The character of the panelling is both rich

and unusual, there being in each compartment an octagon with a plain cross above and below, while the cresting is a twisted floral pattern, and there is excellent conventional work in the frieze. The mantel has Corinthian columns freely treated, placed as if to support the roof, and between them is singular allegorical carving. Some of the pilasters have floral patterns, and the Tudor rose often appears. The ceiling



THE OAK SCREEN IN THE HALL.

with the convoluted floral design adds to the extreme richness of the effect. The elaboration is of a kind almost to defy description, but the pictures will show the very remarkable character of the place.

A similar wealth of handicraft is, indeed, found almost everywhere, notably in the chimney-piece of the Dining Room, and the panelling of the Drawing Room. The boudoir is in a different style, and is almost unique, the walls being covered with Chinese embroideries of great value.

Such a place as Burton Agnes could scarcely be without its ghost, and the story told is so curious as to be worthy of a place here. A certain Mistress Griffith, as legend has it, once made a singular request to her sisters that, after her death, her head should be removed from her body, and be preserved within the house she loved. The promise was made to pacify her, but when she was dead it was forgotten, and,

shortly thereafter, great disturbances in the hall betokened her disquiet and the return of her ghost to the scene of her mortal pilgrimage. In alarm, the coffin was then brought to the surface, and ghoulis hands carried the head of the deceased lady into the mansion, whereupon all the disturbances ceased. Time passed on, and one day a maid-servant threw the mummified remain from a window, and it fell upon a passing waggon, which seemed rooted by magic to the road, and could not be moved until the skull was restored to its place. Again, one of the Boyntons, who was sceptical of the lady's power, had the skull buried in the park, but the dreadful wailings began afresh, and ceased only when the skull had been restored. The skull still exists, and the tenth baronet, respecting the legend, had it built up in the wall of the house where it still remains, but the troubled spirit is at rest, and disturbs the beautiful old house no more.



THE DRAWING-ROOM.