

AUDLEY END, ESSEX.

THE great seat of Lord Braybrooke was, in the splendour of its early prime, accounted amongst the most princely of all the houses of England. James I., in his fine sarcastic vein, said that it was "too much for a King, though it might do very well for a Lord Treasurer." Lord Chancellor Audley, who, as old Fuller says, "carved for himself, in the feast of abbey lands, the first cut, and that a dainty morsel"—the magnificent priory of the Holy Trinity in Aldgate—had, as his chief share in the monastic spoil, the broad possessions of the rich abbey of Walden in Essex. It is not certain that he ever lived there. His daughter married the fourth

Duke of Norfolk, whose son Thomas Howard, one of the captains against the Armada, was raised to the peerage as Lord Howard de Walden by Elizabeth, and advanced to the earldom of Suffolk by James I. He it was who built Audley End, beginning it in 1603 and completing it in 1616. The famous John Thorpe was his architect, and Evelyn described the wondrous fabric as "one of the stateliest palaces in the kingdom, 'twixt antiq. and modern; it shows without like a diadem by the decorations of the cupolas and other ornaments on the pavilions." The original plan included two quadrangles and a great gateway, flanked by imposing towers, in the admirable style



THE HALL AS SEEN FROM THE STAIRWAY.



THE HALL AND ITS OAKEN SCREEN.



THE VANBRUGH SCREEN IN THE HALL.

of the time, rich and glowing in the glory of the windows, and of fairy-like splendour against the sky, with chimneys, turrets, and towers.

So splendid was the place that it attracted the admiration of Charles II., to whom it was sold in

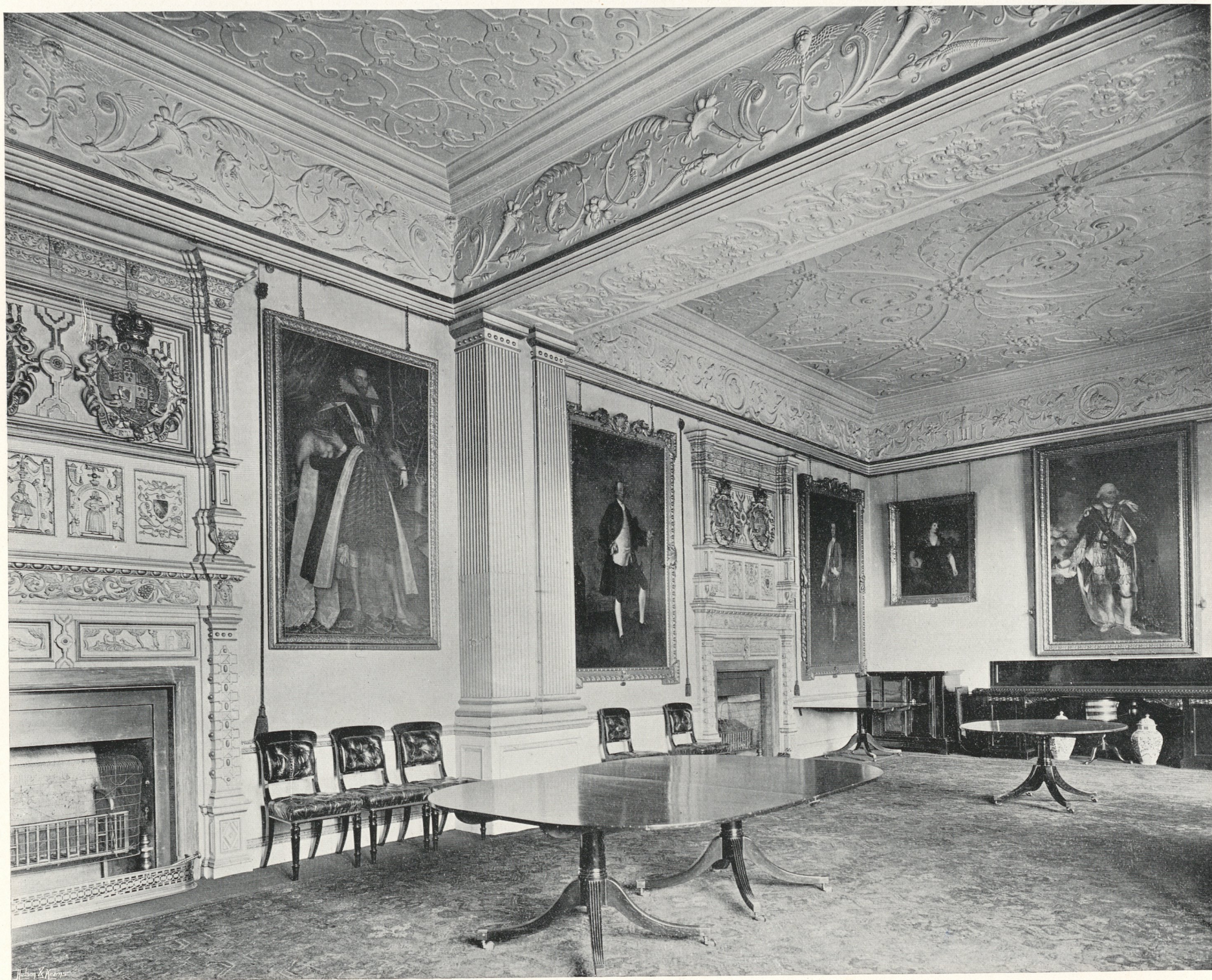
Vanbrugh the western quadrangle was removed, and other alterations were made. The tenth Earl died intestate in 1745, and Lord Effingham entered upon the property. It afterwards passed by sale, and it would appear by heredity also, to the



THE DRAWING-ROOM, SHOWING THE FISH CEILING.

1665, but the whole of the purchase money was never paid, and the place was restored to the fifth Earl of Suffolk in 1701, on condition that the debts upon it should be blotted out. Changes came over the house in 1721, dictated by the taste of the time; and on the advice of Sir John

Countess of Portsmouth, who died in 1762. In this lady's time the great gallery forming the eastern side of the inner court was taken down, and the house now consists of three sides of a quadrangle. It passed upon the death of the Countess to her nephew, Field-Marshal Sir John



THE DINING-ROOM.



LORD BRAYBROOKE'S ROOM.



THE LIBRARY.

Griffin-Whitwell, afterwards fourth Lord Howard de Walden and first Lord Braybrooke. Dying without male issue, the first of these peerages fell into abeyance, while the latter, with the properties, passed by special remainder to his kinsman, Richard Aldworth Neville, from whom the present Lord Braybrooke is descended.

The great changes which have passed over the house have left its essential beauty undimmed, and it remains one of the fairest mansions of fretted and enriched stonework in existence, with its two lofty porches of Ionic and Corinthian columns, and all the splendour of its olden character. The entrance is by the north porch to the great hall, which is lighted by five large windows, and is enriched with a magnificent armorial mantel, and panelled with oak, forming an ideal background for many fine family portraits and trophies, which harmonise with the faded tints of silken banners, worked with the arms of the different owners of the Manor of Walden, while the compartments of the ceiling bear the crests and the coats of various members of the Howard family. This hall, 90ft. long, has at the north end a great screen of carved oak, reaching nearly to the ceiling, which is said to have been brought originally from Italy. At the south end is another fine stone screen, which, though out of keeping with its surroundings, is an interesting example of the famous Sir John Vanbrugh's taste. Portraits of Lord Chancellor Audley and his wife by Holbein hang here, and there are works by Lucas de Heere, Mytens, and others, while a fine Charles II. by Lely is in the inner hall.

The splendid suite of reception-rooms, which forms a distinctive feature of the house, is on the first floor, the great Saloon being reached by the two stone staircases leading up from the hall. This beautiful apartment, which is 60ft. long, was originally called the Fish Room, from the quaint ceiling, richly ornamented with dolphins and various sea monsters gambolling thereon in bold relief. An even more notable feature is the series of full-length portraits, each let into a recess or arch, representing the successive owners of Audley End. Many of these

are copies made from originals by such masters as Holbein and Kneller. Above the chimney-piece is the coat armour of Thomas, first Earl of Suffolk, impaling Knyvett, with its quarters, encircled with the Garter, and over two of the doorways are paintings of Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth. From the great windows which light the Saloon fine views of the park and of the river Cam are obtained.

Next to the Saloon is Lord Braybrooke's delightful sitting-room, of which the windows face south, and light up the fine collection of Canalettis and various interesting specimens of the Dutch school. Here also a valuable Rembrandt and a Holbein portrait are worthy of attention. Of the two libraries each is in its way remarkable; the smaller one was formerly hung with crimson Florentine damask, given to the Neville of his day by Cosmo, Grand Duke of Tuscany. The large library contains an ancient chimney-piece and a goodly collection of books—something like 10,000 volumes it is said—a fine manuscript Psalter, dating from the days of Edward I., and a large paper copy of the Aldine "Pliny" being among the treasures which have come down to the present owner of Audley End. In excellent keeping with the somewhat severe furnishings of an ideal country library is its fine chimney-piece emblazoned with the arms of Audley and Neville. The same scheme of chimney-piece decoration is carried out in the beautiful dining-room, which faces north into the quadrangle, and contains many portraits of great historical and general interest.

The beautiful chapel was fitted up, about 1770, by Lord Howard de Walden, who, breaking loose from the then dominant taste for Italian styles, gave it the clustered columns, pointed arches, and fan-groined tracery, with nave, side aisles, and transepts of a Gothic church, though it must be confessed without fully understanding the essentials of the style. Scarcely an apartment can be entered in this noble English house that is not invested with some historic interest or adorned with some art treasure. Audley End, indeed, stands among the chiefest of the great houses of Stuart England.