

WROXTON ABBEY, BANBURY, OXFORDSHIRE.

THE old seat of Lord North, standing within some three miles of Banbury town, in Oxfordshire, with its fine Stuart character, has affinities of date and style with many other houses depicted in this book. Built up in its foundations are some few remains of the Augustinian Abbey from which it takes its name, whereof the possessions passed at the Dissolution to Sir Thomas Pope, the founder of Trinity College, Oxford. The ancient buildings are said to have been destroyed by fire. In the reign of James I. Sir William Pope, afterwards Earl of Downe, to whom the property then belonged, erected a splendid mansion on the

remains of the Priory. From the Pope family it passed by the marriage of the last heiress, Lady Frances Pope, to Sir Francis North, afterwards Lord Guilford, Lord Keeper in the reign of James II., with whose descendants it still remains.

It will be seen by the illustrations that the internal features are of extraordinary beauty and much elaboration. The door in the inner porch, leading into the Great Hall, is a marvel of Jacobean craftsmanship, much adorned with rich panelling, medallions, and human figures. The hall itself is a very remarkable apartment, with the unusual feature of entwined columns beautifully sculptured to support its carved oak gallery. It has



THE DINING-ROOM.

*ENTRANCE TO THE HALL.*



QUEEN MARY'S ROOM.

happily been restored, for until the time of the late Baroness North its beauties had been concealed by coatings of white paint. There is a remarkable oak mantel-piece, and the panelling is noteworthy. Here may be seen the letter of protection granted by Charles I. to the then Earl of Downe. Here, too, are preserved the bag of the Lord Keeper

North, and remarkable hawking paraphernalia used by James I. on the occasion of his visit. The hall is lighted by two fine windows filled with armorial bearings in stained glass, which came from the ancient family seat of the Norths at Kirtling, Cambs, when the mansion there was pulled down in 1802. The walls are



THE HALL AND GALLERY.

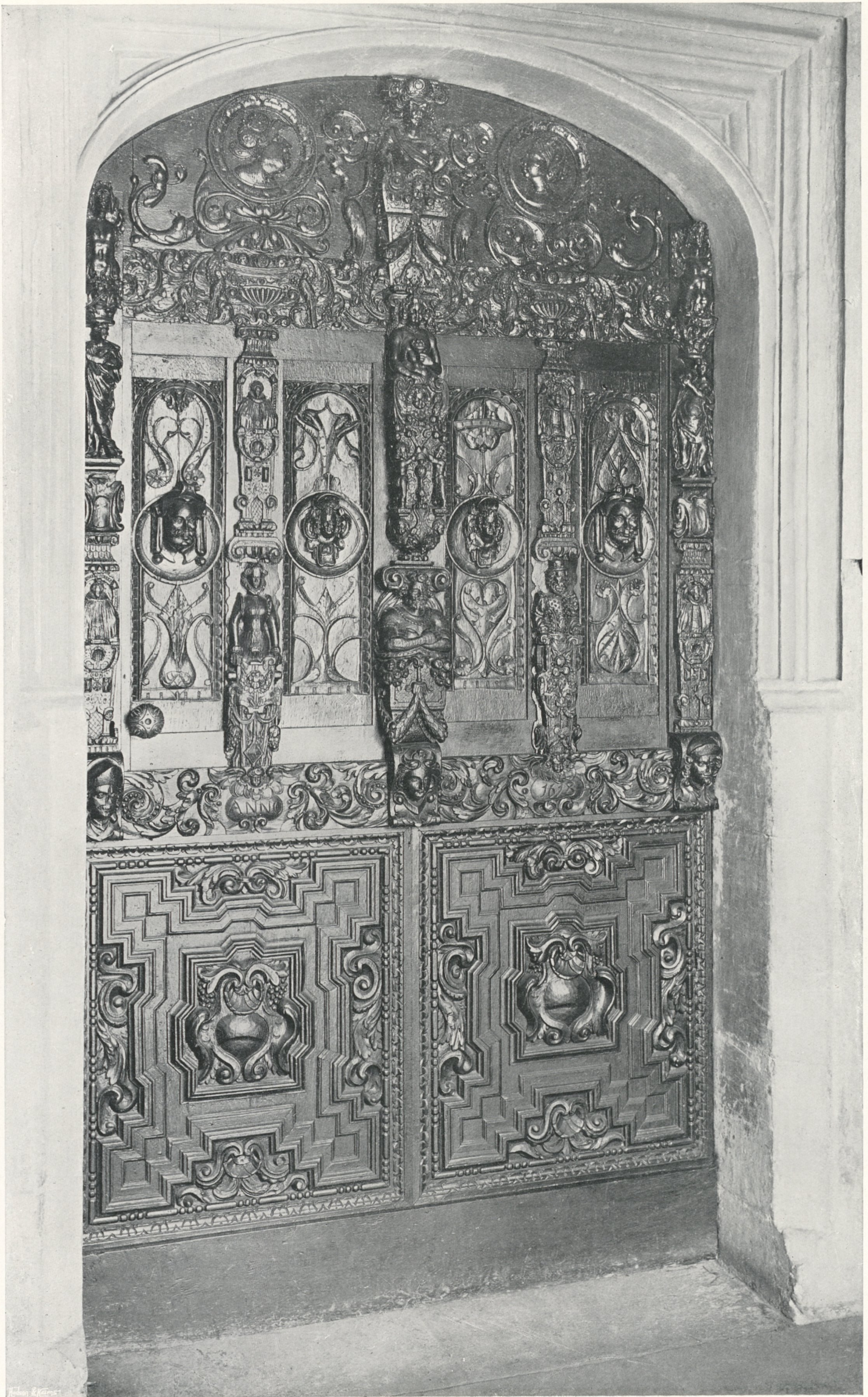


THE HALL MANTEL-PIECE.

covered with family portraits, including those of Sir Thomas Pope, the first owner after the dissolution of the Priory, and his descendants of the noble house of Downe, from whom, through the female line, the present Lord North traces his descent.

The Large Dining Room is panelled throughout with dark oak, and has a fine mantel-piece of the same wood. Over it

hangs a portrait of Lord Guilford, the Lord Keeper of James II. Here, also, are many fine family portraits by Van Dyck, Janssen, Lely, Kneller, and others. The ceiling of this room is a magnificent piece of work. It was put up by the Lord Keeper, who was a great musician as well as lawyer, and left a record of his tastes in the design, which consists of musical instruments of various kinds combined with



THE HALL DOOR, EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

symbols of the law. A door leads hence to the charming Garden Parlour, entirely panelled in dark oak, with fluted pilasters. The pictures here are almost unique. Over the mantel-piece is a very rare portrait of Henry Frince of Wales, elder brother of Charles I., of which an exact replica exists at Hampton Court. The other portraits include an interesting one of Charles I., by Stone; Prince Rupert, especially rare; the Duke of York (James II.) and Princess Henrietta—afterwards Duchess of Orleans—as children; Mary Queen of Scots; Queen Mary of England; Queen Elizabeth as a child, when a State prisoner at Kirtling, by

generations of collectors, as witnessed by their autographs in the volumes.

The Grand Staircase, with a noticeable coved plaster ceiling, is adorned with many pictures, and leads to the Yellow Drawing Room. This splendid apartment, panelled in yellow silk, divided by fluted pilasters in white and gold, is over the Large Dining Room. The mantel-piece of carved Caen stone is remarkably fine; and the furniture, by Chippendale, upholstered in satins and brocades of various colours, and hand-painted, is most beautiful. Here hang family portraits, and there are many curiosities in cases, including relics of Trafalgar, Waterloo, and earlier battles.



THE GARDEN PARLOUR.

Zucchero; and Elizabeth of Bohemia. Portraits of Lord Guilford Dudley, husband of Lady Jane Grey; of Lord Burleigh and Sir Francis Walsingham; and some very fine family portraits, complete a collection of celebrities of Elizabethan and Stuart times which it would be scarcely possible to match. On the same floor is the small Red Drawing Room, in which is a portrait of the Prime Minister, Lord North, with other family portraits, and some very fine miniatures of Royal personages and members of the family. This room leads into the Library, a very charming room, well filled with valuable books, representing the acquisitions of many

Leading from the Yellow Drawing Room are the Princes' Rooms, so called because they have been occupied on several occasions by Heirs Apparent, first by Frederick Prince of Wales, father of George III., and subsequently by the Prince Regent. These rooms are tapestried throughout. On the next *étage* we come to the Japanese Gallery, leading out of which is the room occupied by King James I., and later by Charles I. and his Queen. The furniture and hangings of this chamber remain almost untouched. Beyond this again is the magnificent Tapestry Room, so called from its being entirely panelled with old tapestry of the very finest description.

This room contains a very notable carved bedstead, the whole of the hangings of which, and the counterpane, were worked by Mary Queen of Scots in captivity. The mantel-piece, overmantel, and cupboards are all of beautiful old carved oak.

The Clarence Room derives its name from the fact that it was once occupied by William IV. when Duke of Clarence. The bedstead is a splendid specimen, with the Sacred Heart carved on the canopy, which is supported by beautifully-carved oak pillars. The shutters in this, as indeed in all the other rooms, are finely carved in oak, the patterns being much varied, but all beautiful. This room, like many others, is tapestried. The house has also a beautiful Chapel, which is one of its great features.

It may be added that the first Lord North was born about the year 1496, and was one of Henry VIII.'s Clerks of Parliament, being greatly in favour with the King, who made him Treasurer and afterwards Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations. The King gave him several grants of land, and he was enabled to purchase the Manor of Kirtling, which was the principal seat of the North family till about the year 1735. He was one of Henry's executors, and on the Council of Edward VI. On the death of King Edward he was one of those who acknowledged Lady Jane Grey; but Queen Mary seems to have extended to him the same favour that her father had done—she made him a peer, and chose him to escort her husband, Philip of Spain, from Southampton to Winchester, where the marriage was solemnised.

Roger, second Lord North, a distinguished

general, and afterwards Treasurer of the Household and Ambassador to the King of France, seems also to have stood high in his Sovereign's favour. At the coronation of Elizabeth he was made a Knight of the Bath, and he afterwards accompanied the Earl of Sussex to Vienna, bearing the Order of the Garter to the Emperor Maximilian, a portrait of whom hangs in King James's Dressing Room, together with a portrait of Queen Henrietta, being one of the most interesting in the collection. Dudley, the third Lord North, was the grandson of the second peer; he lived to the age of eighty-five, and enjoyed the title from the days of Elizabeth till some years after the Restoration. His son and heir, the fourth Lord North, was a soldier, a politician, and also had literary tastes. One of the most interesting portraits at Wroxton is of him; he only survived his father ten years, but he lived to see ten of his fourteen children uphold in every way the family credit. It was his second son, first known as Sir Francis North, the Lord Keeper, who became Lord Guilford. The sixth Lord North served under the Duke of Marlborough, and at the battle of Blenheim had his right hand shot off. He died in exile on account of his share in the rebellion of 1715, having been created an Earl by the deposed King James III. He left no son, and the title of Lord North devolved on Francis, the grandson of Lord Guilford, the celebrated Keeper, who was created Earl of Guilford in 1752. It was through the Keeper's marriage with the second daughter and co-heiress of Thomas Pope, Earl of Downe, that Wroxton came into the North family, as has been explained.