

TYTHROP HOUSE, OXFORDSHIRE.

THE pictures which illustrate the fine work at Tythrop House are the indication of the work of a master craftsman in wood.

Nowhere else do we know of a stairway richer or more splendid in style of adornment. There is much else at that fine mansion which might have been depicted, but we have chosen the noble stairway, with its three ascents and its gallery, as the feature best worthy of being brought before our readers. Many as are the views held as to the true principles of adornment, the object to be sought in our endeavours—whether Nature should be reproduced as she is, or be transmuted into a new and conventional form, whether simplicity should be desired or elaboration, whether structural features should be emphasised or concealed—whatever views, we say, are held as to the plenishings and adornments of the home, there is not anywhere the man who undervalues craftsmanship, the evidence of thought expressed by the human hand; and thus there is no one who will not admire the marvellous carving of the great stairway at Tythrop House. This masterpiece, as we are told, and can well believe, is from the hand of Grinling Gibbons. It was impossible for that marvellous man to execute all the commissions offered to him in the time of his prosperity, when the trembling flowers of wood over his doorway in La Belle Sauvage Court had attested his skill, and when the admiration of John Evelyn and the patronage and employment of Christopher Wren had made him famous. There were those who worked with him and for him, under his direction and guidance—men like Selden,

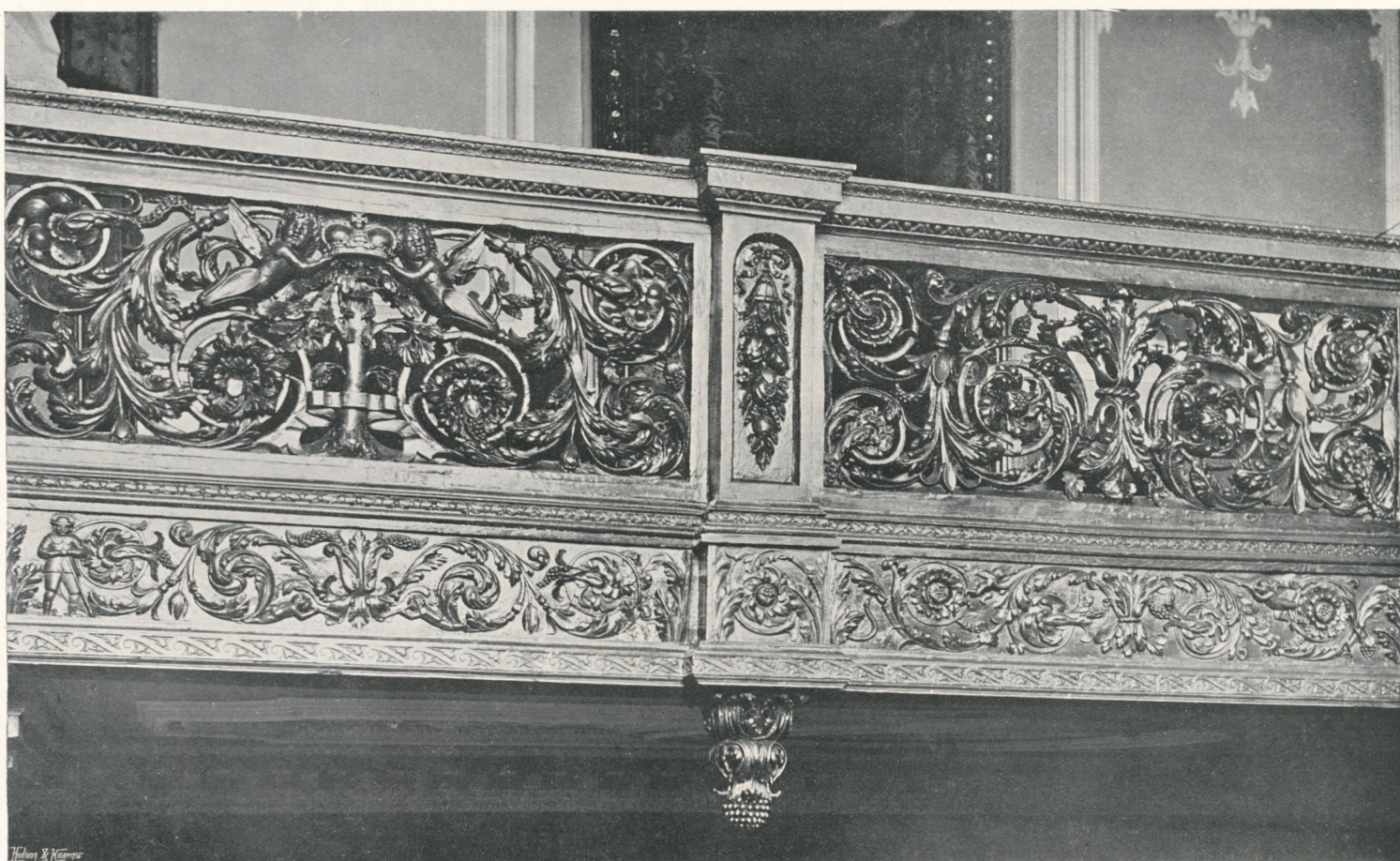
who lost his life in saving the carved room at Petworth from a destructive fire; like Henry Phillips, who was with him at Whitehall; and like Watson, who laboured at Chatsworth, though there are those who contend that the latter worked independently of Gibbons, and was a genius on his own account. It is not necessary, evidently, to hold that Gibbons with his own hand executed the whole of the beautiful work at Tythrop House, but unquestionably his mind and influence are there. The pillar support at the foot is beautified with fruit and foliage carved in bold relief, and is supported by remarkably handsome scrollwork. The scroll design, which figures so prominently in Renaissance panel-work, is the dominant motive in this magnificent work of the chisel. Nowhere is the carving surpassed in the boldness, freedom, and lightness of the curves. In the perforated balustrade—if the word may be used where there

are no balusters—these flowing and graceful forms assume the character of twisting growths in the conventional classic taste. There is a quality in the lines and manner that will not escape anyone. Beautifully sculptured cherubs are in this bold curling greenery, forcing their way through, as it were, in their efforts to ascend, while others support crowns, and there are heraldic birds in wreaths, and much else to give variety. The carved newel-posts are marvels of this fine craftsmanship. In truth, this wood-carving is not, in its style and manner, excelled.

Tythrop House is about two and a-quarter miles to the east of Thame, within the liberty of Tythrop, in the county of Oxford,



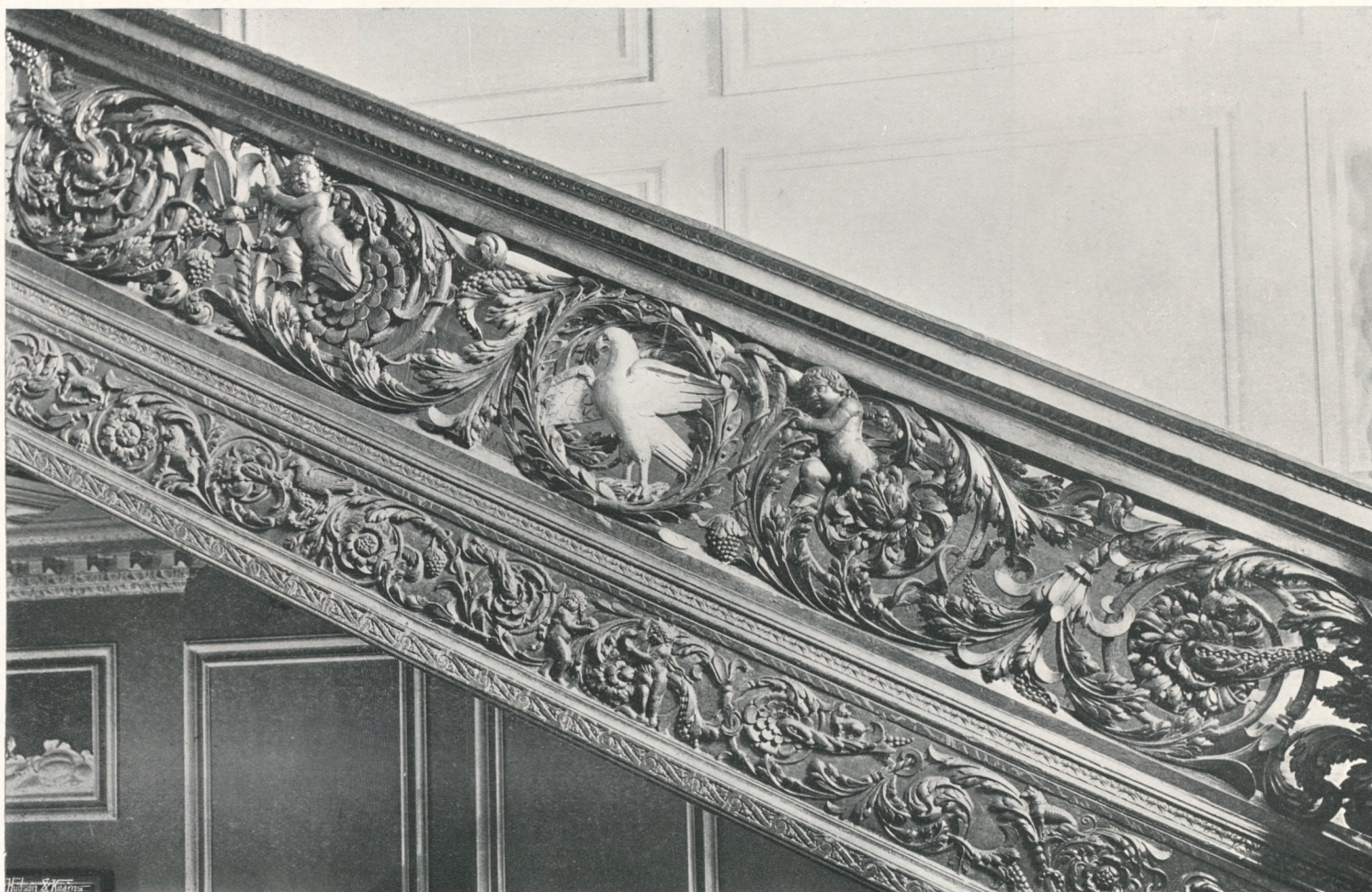
DRAWING-ROOM CHIMNEY-PIECE.



THE CARVED GALLERY OF THE STAIRWAY.

"the liberty" forming part of the parish of Kingsey. This parish, including the liberty of Tythrop, formed part of the Royal demesne, and was purchased in the year 1619 from the Crown by Henry Spiller of the City of London, Merchant, the estate being described as "the Manor and Lordship of Kingsey, otherwise

Rose Kingsey, otherwise Tythrope." Henry Spiller's only son, Sir Robert Spiller, Knight, married a daughter of Sir John Dormer of Crendon and Dorton, County Bucks, and their only child, Jane Spiller, succeeded to her father's estate, and married the Hon. James Herbert, sixth son of Philip, fourth Earl of Pembroke.



THE PIERCED CARVING OF THE BALUSTRADE.



THE LOWER STAIRWAY.



FOUR SIDES OF THE STAIRWAY.



THE ASCENT TO THE GALLERY.

James Herbert, the son of the marriage, who was Member of Parliament for Malmesbury in 1665, and for Aylesbury in 1702, succeeded to his mother's estate, and, marrying Lady Catherine Osborne, daughter of the Duke of Leeds, he died in 1709, whereupon the estate descended to his son, James Herbert, who was Member of Parliament for Queensborough. He died in 1720, leaving two sons surviving, the elder of them (the fourth James Herbert), who was Member of Parliament for Oxford in 1739, succeeding to the estate. He died unmarried, and was succeeded by his brother, Philip Herbert, who himself died in 1759, without issue, leaving his sisters, Ann Herbert and Sophia, who had married Philip, sixth Viscount Wenman of Thame Park, Oxon, his co-heiresses. On a partition of the properties, Lady Wenman took as her share other estates, which had passed to her and her sister, while Miss Ann Herbert became the sole owner of the Kingsey property. Viscount and Lady Wenman had only one son, who, on his father's death in 1760, became the seventh Viscount. He died in the year 1800 without issue, whereupon the title became extinct. The only surviving daughter of the sixth Viscount Wenman—viz., the Hon. Sophia Wenman—married Mr. William Humphrey Wykeham of Swalcliffe, County Oxon, of which marriage, amongst other children, there were two sons, viz., Mr. William Richard Wykeham of Swalcliffe, and afterwards of Thame Park, which he inherited through his mother, and Mr. Philip Thomas Wykeham. On the death of Miss Ann Herbert, which occurred in the year 1810, the Kingsey estate passed under a clause in her will to her great-nephew, the above Philip Thomas Wykeham, and on his death, in the year 1832, it descended to his eldest son, Mr. Philip Thomas Herbert Wykeham, formerly of the 7th Hussars, who, dying in the year 1879, devised the estates to his nephew, the present owner Mr. Philip James Digby Wykeham.

Reverting for a moment to the Thame Park property, Mr. William Richard Wykeham, who

died in 1800, left an only daughter, Miss Sophia Wykeham, who was created a peeress in the year 1834 by the title of Baroness Wenman. She died unmarried, having devised the Thame Park and other estates by her will in strict settlement, under which will the before-named Philip Thomas Herbert Wykeham was tenant for life, and, on his death without issue, they passed to his brother, Mr. Aubrey Wenman Wykeham, who afterwards assumed the name of Musgrave; and, on that gentleman's death in 1879, they vested in his eldest son, Mr. Wenman Aubrey Wykeham - Musgrave, the elder brother of Mr. Philip James Digby Wykeham.

The mansion of Tythrop, inherited as has been described, is cherished and preserved, and is in many ways noteworthy. A handsome edifice of stone, it stands in a well-wooded park of about 120 acres, very pleasantly situated. Among the many valued possessions in the house, none is so interesting as the large collection of family portraits and other valuable pictures, many of which represent members of the Herbert family. The choicest gem in the collection is a magnificent portrait by Van Dyck of Philip Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, carrying the staff and key as Grand Chamberlain of Charles I. This was exhibited at Burlington House in the year 1882, and is universally admitted to be one of the masterpieces of the painter. There are several other pictures by Van Dyck, and numerous portraits by Sir Peter Lely, the choicest of which is, perhaps, a painting representing himself and his wife, the latter playing on a lute. Amongst other painters, Rubens, Van Ostade, Mytens, Van Allen, Kneller, Stubbs, and Linnell are represented by admirable examples; while there are many most interesting small paintings, including portraits of Mary Queen of Scots, Don John of Austria, the Earl of Essex, beheaded in 1601, and others the painters of which are not known. The Drawing Room has a very beautiful carved chimney-piece, enframing a mirror, which we illustrate.