

WESTWOOD PARK, WORCESTERSHIRE.

WESTWOOD PARK stands something less than two miles to the west of Droitwich, in Worcestershire, in a very fine situation, upon an eminence commanding very beautiful prospects, and with a park remarkable for being laid out in "rays of planting." Here, in ancient times, was a small priory of Benedictine nuns, subject to the Abbey of Fontevraud, the site of which appears to have been upon the slope of the bank above the present fish-ponds. After the Dissolution the place was granted by Henry VIII. to Sir John Pakington, a serjeant-at-law, who was given many judicial offices, chiefly in Wales, but whose family seat was at Hampton Lovett, in Worcestershire. The bluff King, whose portrait is enframed in the magnificent carving over the chimney-piece in the Long Gallery at

Westwood, enriched Sir John with not a few grants, for he stood high in the Royal favour, and knighted him after the return from Boulogne in 1545. When he died the greater part of his estate passed to his nephew, Thomas Pakington, the son of his brother Robert, who was knighted by Queen Mary in 1553, and died in 1571.

It does not appear to be known with any certainty that a mansion house existed at Westwood at the time, and the central block of the existing structure dates from the possession of Sir John Pakington, who succeeded on the death of his father, Sir Thomas. Queen Elizabeth visited Worcestershire in August, 1578, and seems to have been attracted by the wit and the handsome person of the squire of Hampton Lovett. She invited him to Court, where he was received with great favour, and

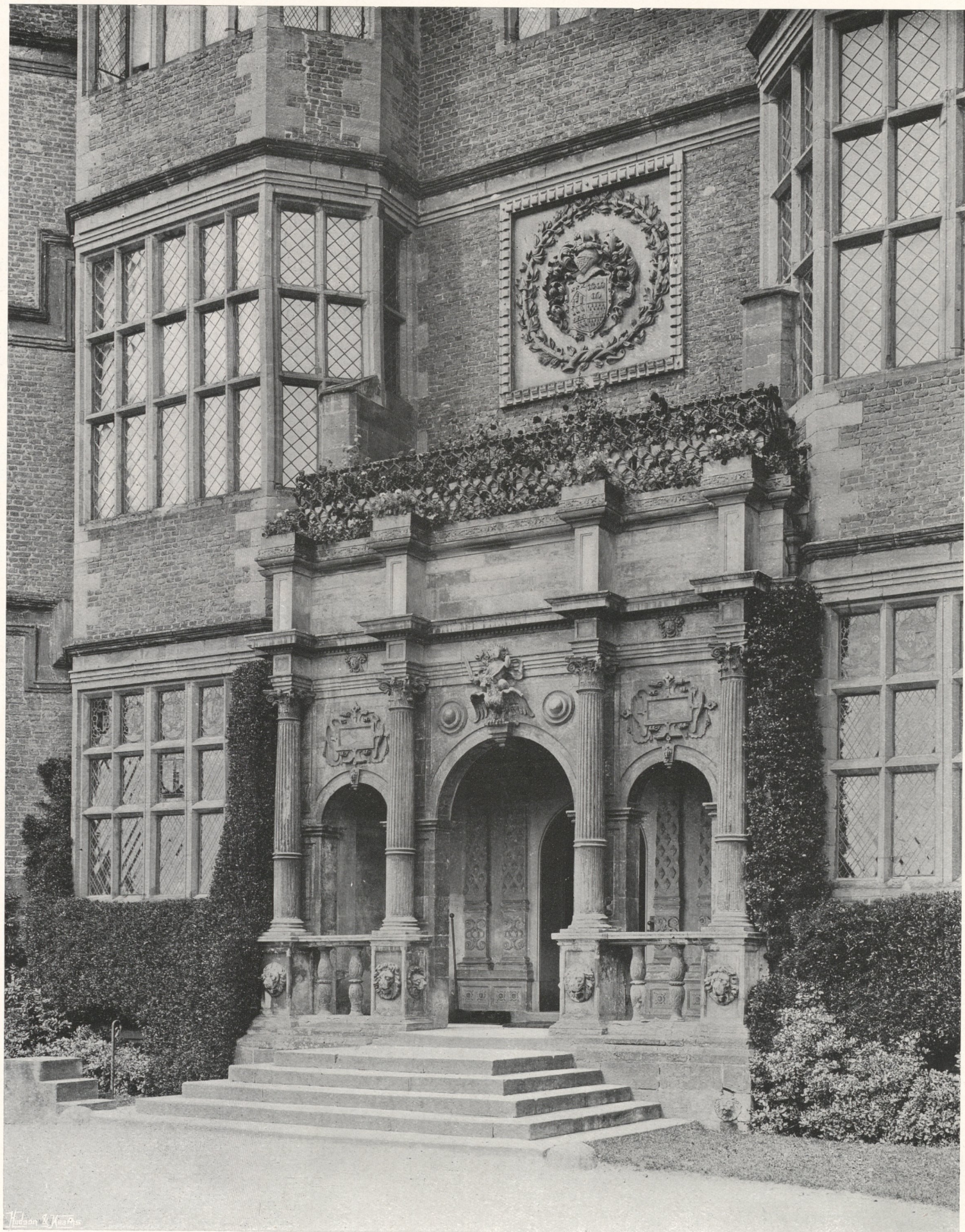


THE GATE-HOUSE.

plunged into the vortex of the fashionable life of his time, but took great pleasure in athletic exercises, and was styled "lusty Pakington" by the Queen. Pakington was knighted in 1587,

office—doubtless a rich sinecure—of bow-bearer of Malvern Chase.

His residence was then at Hampton Lovett, but he appears to have conceived the idea of



THE PORCH.

but appears to have outrun his means and to have been enmeshed in financial difficulties. The Queen came to his aid, however, and he received a patent for starch in 1593, and was given the

building a kind of banqueting-house or place of resort at Westwood, and to him the central portion of the house is due, but it did not become the residence of the family until after the Civil

War. It was a fine and excellent piece of work in the style of the period, and when all was ready Pakington gave a great house-warming, at which the neighbouring nobles and gentlemen were hospitably entertained, though they were chiefly lodged at Hampton Lovett. We have the authority of Nash for saying that the house at Westwood was a lodge and banqueting-room only, standing in the midst of a fine woodland. Sir John married the daughter of Humphrey Smith, the Queen's silkman, widow of Benedict Barnham, who brought him a considerable estate, which enabled him to retrieve his fortunes, but the marriage was not a happy one, nevertheless.

The knight was succeeded by his son John, who was created a baronet in 1620, and was M.P. for Aylesbury, in which district the family had estates. He died as a young man, and was succeeded by Sir John Pakington, the second baronet, who suffered much in the Royal cause in the Civil War, and to whom the present character of Westwood Park must be ascribed. The house at Hampton Lovett had suffered heavily in the troublous time, and the cavalier baronet therefore transferred his residence to Westwood. The King came to his assistance, and a grant of £4,000 was made to him under the name of "Edward Gregory," as the King explained, lest the example should be prejudicial. It was at this time that Westwood received the four diagonal wings, which were built out from the original structure, giving it a form that appears to be unique. The arrangement presented some difficulties of communication between rooms, but the effect is excellent externally, for there are four great fronts all grand and imposing. The portico is an exquisite example of Renaissance work, and the details are extremely pretty and attractive; but the fluted Corinthian columns were originally the support of a balustrade, which was removed to make the top available as a balcony to the Great Saloon. Otherwise very few changes have passed over the structure.

Sir John Pakington, the cavalier baronet, died in 1680, and was succeeded by another Sir John, who spent a retired life at Westwood, and was reputed to be one of the finest Anglo-Saxon scholars of his time. He represented his county in Parliament from 1685 to 1687. Dean Hicke was his intimate friend, and appears to have written some of his learned works at Westwood.

His "*Grammatica Anglo-Saxonica*" is dedicated to Sir John Pakington, and we shall be pardoned for quoting its description of the beauties of Westwood and its gardens and park at the time, as well adapted to the seclusion of the student: "*Ibi porticus, atria, prophylæa, horti, ambulacra clausa et subdialia, recta et sinuosa, omnia studiis commoda; ibi luci, silvæ, nemora, prata, saltus, planities, pascua, et nihil quod animum pene a literis abhorrentem ad legendum, audiendumve, et quovismodo discendum componere et conciliare potest.*"

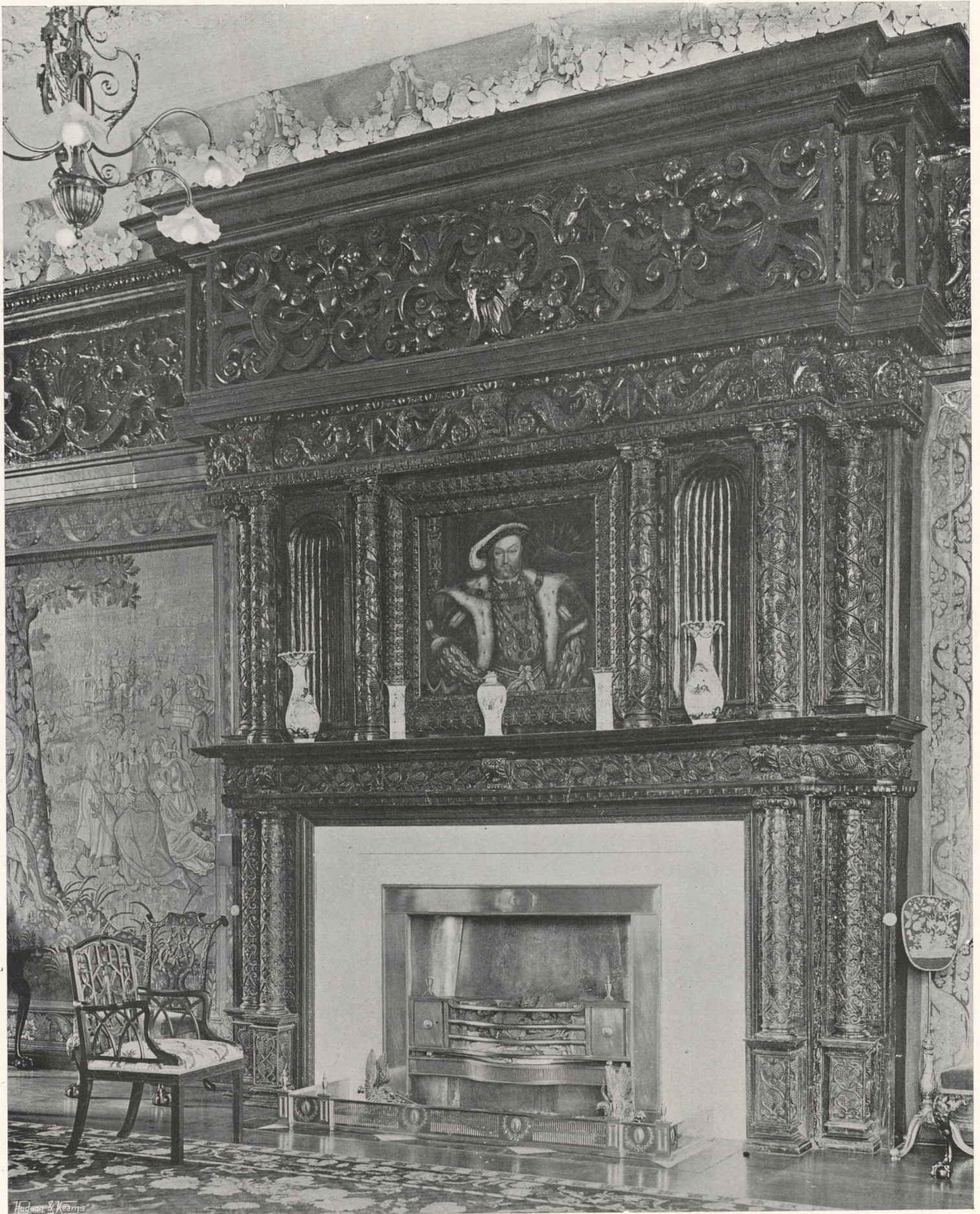


THE STAIRWAY.

The student baronet was succeeded by a worthy gentleman, another Sir John Pakington, who lived until 1728, and is supposed to have been the original of the famous Sir Roger de Coverley. It is true that Addison disclaims having had any originals for his characters, but, although Sir Roger does not altogether answer to Sir John in the circumstances of his life, there are undoubtedly resemblances in the two personalities, and again in Coverley Hall and its surroundings, as resembling Westwood Park, with a ruined abbey near it, and its pleasant walks "struck

out of a wood in the midst of which the house stands." Thus it is pleasant to associate Sir John Pakington with the first of Addison's genial society—the "Gentleman of Worcestershire, of ancient descent, a baronet, his name Sir Roger de Coverley." What is quite certain is that Sir John Pakington is not known so much as the typical high Tory and Churchman that he was, as he is as the supposed original of the famous Sir Roger. Addison's baronet was a bachelor, but Sir John Pakington was twice married.

Two of his sons pre-deceased him, but his third son, Sir Herbert Perrot Pakington, succeeded at Westwood Park as fifth baronet, and, like many of his ancestors, represented his county in Parliament. Sir Herbert's two sons—Sir John and Sir Herbert—followed him in succession, and the baronetcy became extinct on the death of Sir John, the eighth baronet, in 1830. The eldest daughter of the seventh baronet had married Mr. William Russell of Powick Court, and their son, Mr. John Somerset Russell, who



THE CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE LONG GALLERY.



THE LONG GALLERY.

on the death of the last baronet of the original creation had taken the name of Pakington in lieu of Russell, was himself created a baronet in 1846. This gentleman was a well-known politician, and was Colonial Secretary, twice First Lord of the Admiralty, and Secretary of State for War. He was made a G.C.B. in 1859, and in March, 1874, was raised to the peerage as Baron Hampton of Hampton Lovett and of Westwood, Worcestershire. The present owner of Westwood Park is Mr. E. Partington.

We shall now briefly describe the arrangements of the interior of this singularly interesting house, in order to indicate some of its special features. Passing through the fine portico, the Great Hall is entered, and is some 60ft. long and proportionately high and wide, and lighted by the transomed windows on each side of the doorway. It is a spacious and dignified approach to the beautiful house, finely furnished, and with armorial glass in its latticed panes. The Library and Billiard Room occupy the projecting wings, and are attractive apartments, deriving special

character from their unusual situation, and having enriched ceilings and excellent plenishings.

Parallel with the entrance front is the Great Staircase, extending from one side of the house to the other, and thus practically dividing it into two parts. It is of unusual design and very stately. The material is oak, and the newel-posts terminate in elegantly carved Corinthian columns, each supporting a globe. It may be questioned whether these classic shafts are happily employed merely for this purpose, but the arrangement is interesting and characteristic. Upon the walls hang fine pictures, and there is a panelled ceiling of wood with bosses at the intersections of the ribs. The Staircase leads up to the first floor, and to two Withdrawing Rooms occupying the front wings, both of them elegant and attractive, with fine ceilings. Everywhere throughout the house the ceilings are admirable, many of them of the best work in plaster, deeply moulded, and with floral and scroll designs boldly sculptured.

The Long Gallery extends the whole width of the structure, and is very fine in its proportions and features. It is, indeed, the most interesting chamber in the house, preserving in its interior the spirit of the external character of the building.

It is large and lofty, with a magnificent fireplace and mantel, which has beautiful columns admirably sculptured with the vine pattern, fluted niches, and a carved framework enclosing an admirable portrait of Henry VIII. An elaborate moulded frieze surrounds the room, and there are some fine tapestries. The ceiling is a glorious work in plaster, deeply coffered, and enriched with floral designs and graceful festoons in the cornice.

From the various points of view from which Westwood Park may be regarded, it is abundantly interesting. It is a magnificent example of Stuart architecture, grafted upon a Tudor structure—a mansion associated with many prominent people also. Its gateway, which is illustrated, is a most remarkable and interesting structure. It has peculiarly interesting features in its gardens and grounds, affording quite a typical example of a particular manner of the gardener's art. The historical interests of the house, as they are related to the personalities of its owners, are many. It is thus a mansion that may well claim the regard of Englishmen, as illustrative of much that is notable in the history of the country, belonging to a period in which extraordinary zeal was shown in the building of great houses and the formation of large estates.