

PARHAM PARK, SUSSEX.

SUSSEX is one of those English counties which have seen a wondrous deal of the national and personal life of our countrymen. There is scarcely a Sussex village that is not in some measure a landmark of history, and if, sometimes, the solitary hamlet seems cut off from the busy hum of the urgent world, living amid the folds of the hills an uneventful life of its own, be sure that in its annals there have been stirring events or curious happenings to record. It is a county rich in passages of sylvan beauty, and dignified in many places, as at Parham Park, Lord Zouche's stately seat, by the possession of old ancestral trees of mighty growth and splendid form. The open heights of the Downs, with their subtle effect of atmosphere and distance, their

changing hues and individual character, their romantic prospects of land and sea, have a fascination which none who know them can resist. Nestling below their southern slopes and sheltered from the chilling blasts are many quaint and picturesque villages, and near them not a few of the houses of the great, who have chosen this favoured region as one desirable to dwell in.

Parham Park is one of the most important and stately old mansions in western Sussex—a charming architectural creation, with noble gardens and a beautiful park, lying at the foot of the Downs, and having behind it a hill commanding a great prospect of land and sea, with the Isle of Wight to close the view. The house has been restored by judicious hands, so that it bears the true aspect of that spacious



THE BARON'S HALL.

age in which it was built. It stands where the spacious level of the lower country melts insensibly into the graceful upland curves, and the broad acres smile under their ample share of the sunlight. Before the Conquest the Abbot of Westminster held Parham Manor, but one Tovi, a freeman, was settled there. The place was numbered among the broad possessions of Earl Roger, and in the centuries that followed passed through the families of St. John and Tregoz, Edward Tregoz having been lord in 1399, after which period Parham seems to have lapsed to the Crown. The Abbots of Westminster, continued, however, to hold the manor, and at the Dissolution their possession came to the King. Parham was thereafter sold to Robert Palmer, third son of Thomas Palmer of Angmering, the sale being effected in 1540 at the price of £1,225 6s. 5d., and a yearly rental of £6 13s. 4d. We do not know what manner of house stood on the site at the time, but some parts of a mediæval dwelling-place are embodied in the existing structure. Thomas Palmer, the new owner's son, completed the house almost as it stands to-day, and enclosed a park, and Sir Thomas Palmer, Robert's grandson, sold the estate in 1597 to Sir Thomas Bisshopp, Secretary of State under Sir Francis Walsingham.

The house is built of chalk from the Downs, faced with stone, and its south and west fronts are excellent work of Elizabethan date. The trace of the modern hand is still upon the structure, but where should we wish to see better work of its kind than that glorious hall window of many lights, crested by the quaint gables and picturesque chimneys above? In August, 1591, Queen Elizabeth is said to have visited Sir Thomas Palmer's house, and to have dined in the newly-finished Hall on her way to Cowdray. There seems to be no confirmation of the tradition, but it is worthy of remark that the date, 1583, and the Queen's arms occur on the wall at the upper end of the Hall. The present flat ceiling is of the same date, and it is suggested that it may not have been originally there. Whether that be the case or not, this arrangement has enabled the beautiful Long Gallery, which we illustrate, to be constructed, a feature quite characteristic of the time, though rarely found perhaps in the same relative position. The gallery at Parham is lined with portraits of the Bisshops and their connections, including one of Henry Bisshopp, a stout Royalist, who was concealed here from the Parliamentary forces, and who is represented with a dog which shared his hiding-place, and on whose silence his fate depended. Entered from this gallery is a small Chapel with a curious Jacobean wooden font. The Hall below is lighted by four large windows, 24ft. high, and, according to the custom of the times, has a carved oak screen at the lower end in very perfect preservation, as may be seen in one of the pictures. The north and east sides of the house belong to

the reign of Henry VIII., and some parts to a still earlier date. The Kitchen is remarkable as being identical in plan with that of Christ Church, Oxford, and is a cube of 25ft., with two great fireplaces, beneath Gothic arches, 14ft. 6in. wide.

The house passed, after the death of Sir Thomas Bisshopp, through the hands of many descendants, and has never since been alienated, but has been transmitted through female heirs. Sir Cecil Bisshopp, second baronet, made some changes in the mansion about 1710 rather prejudicial to its character, and the portico on the south side seems to have been refaced about that time. The "Topographer" of 1791 figures the house, and remarks that the windows were rendered uniform by new sashes, though some still remained in their original state. "The workmen are now, in the absence of the family, making similar alterations, and adding and refitting several rooms." At the same time, though the old was being destroyed, something of sham antique had been added in the shape of "castellated stables of rough stone work." In Neale's "Views of Seats," published in 1828, the gables are not shown, the projecting bays having then been given segmental tops and plain sash windows. Happily, since that time the house has been well restored, and on the south side fine bay windows have been added in admirable keeping with the old.

Sir Cecil Bisshopp, the seventh baronet, who was concerned in modernising the house, succeeded in establishing his claim to the ancient barony of Zouche de Haryngworth in 1815. William La Zouche, lord of that place, was summoned to Parliament as a Baron in 1308, and his honours rested with his descendants, of whom five immediately following bore his name of William. John, the seventh baron, was attainted in 1485, but his attainder was reversed, and the barony of Zouche, to which that of St. Maur had been added, continued until it became abeyant between the two daughters of the eleventh baron, and so remained until Sir Cecil Bisshopp, sixth in descent from the elder daughter, Elizabeth, succeeded, as we have said, in establishing his claim to the title. At his death it again became abeyant between two daughters, but a year later the abeyance was terminated in favour of the elder of them, who had married the Hon. Robert Curzon, M.P. This lady was succeeded in the title by her son, Robert Curzon, the fourteenth baron, father of the present Lord Zouche, in 1870. The late Lord Zouche was a nobleman of fine taste, who richly stored his house with precious things. He made a great collection of early armour, and the display at Parham was almost unrivalled, while the gold and silver plate and ivory carvings were very beautiful, and the Library was rich in ancient manuscripts. This nobleman, whose book "The Monasteries of the Levant" is well known, brought much armour from the East, some of it



THE LONG GALLERY.

from the church of St. Irene at Constantinople, which had been worn by the defenders of the Palæologi against the Turks in 1452. The collection also includes three complete suits of armour of 1160, 1250, and 1350, and complete suits of Gothic armour, with pointed toes, prior to 1452, as well as many helmets and several cross-hilted swords. The late Lord Zouche described the collection in the *Archæological Journal*, XXII. 1865. Three of the magnificent suits and a great number of splendid and characteristic helmets will be seen in our picture of the interior of the Hall. Most of the precious manuscripts from the Library have been removed to the British Museum. In the hands of the fourteenth baron the great house at Parham was well cared for, and our illustrations will show that the place is maintained in perfect state and order.

The park is famous among the many beautiful parks of Sussex, and has interests that are quite its own. Knox, in his "Ornithological Ramble in Sussex," rightly speaks of it as a forest-like park, or rather chase, with its thickets of birch and whitethorn, and its wide-branched elms and oaks, the latter especially grand and picturesque. On every side is a realm of sylvan beauty, and a background of green hill is seen here and there between the splendid masses of foliage. Knox speaks with enthusiasm of the most interesting heronry there. "Advancing with the utmost caution, the visitor may perhaps

invade the colony without disturbing them, and hear the indescribable, half-hissing sound, uttered by the young birds when in the act of being fed. The slightest noise, however, even the snapping of a stick, will send the parent birds off at once. The herons assemble early in February, and then set about repairing their nests, but the trees are never entirely deserted during the winter months, a few birds, probably some of the more backward of the preceding season, roosting among their boughs every night." The history of the heronry is curious. The ancestors of the birds were brought originally, it is believed, to Penshurst, by the steward of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, from Coity Castle in South Wales, and at Penshurst the herons remained until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when, some of their nesting trees being cut down, they resented the intrusion and migrated to Michelgrove, some fifty miles south-west of Penshurst, and six or seven south of Parham. The proprietor of Michelgrove having cut some of his trees, the birds migrated again, and established themselves at Parham in 1826. Some of them were alarmed once more by the trees there being pruned, and they then betook themselves to Arundel, about six miles away, but came back after a while, and increased and multiplied, being thereafter disturbed only by the thieving rooks. The heronry adds much interest to the ferny deeps and the glorious old oaks, pines, and firs of Parham Park.



PARHAM PARK.