

EASTNOR CASTLE, HEREFORDSHIRE.

THE castellated mansion of Lady Henry Somerset occupies a very fine position near Ledbury, within sight of the Malvern Hills, and in the midst of most attractive and varied scenery, commanding a great outlook from its position of vantage upon the slope of a sylvan hill. The district, moreover, is full of history. The estate came to Lady Henry Somerset from her father, the third and last Earl Somers, who died in 1883, when the barony of Somers passed to a cousin. The present possessor of the estate is the eleventh in descent from Richard Cocks, the first of the family who settled in the place. John Somers, Lord High Chancellor, was the man of whom Walpole said that he was "the model of Addison and the touchstone of Swift," while Macaulay described him as "the greatest man of that age," and the family has given other men of note to the country.

On an island in the lake, now marked by a clump of trees, stood the ancient manor house in which the ancestors of Earl Somers lived from the sixteenth century to 1812, when the first Earl built Eastnor Castle from the designs of Sir Robert Smirke, R.A., in a style which that prominent architect considered to be Norman, and there are round machicolated towers, curtain walls, and embattlements. The castle is beautiful in its surroundings, and owes its inner harmony and attractions mainly to the artistic and elevated tastes of the late Earl Somers. It is approached by a broad flight of stone

steps leading up to the principal entrance. The Entrance Hall, which has an imposing character, with columns and arches of precious marble, richly inlaid, is the storehouse of much very beautiful and interesting ancient armour and arms. Among the latter are a Venetian halberd, dated 1525, a tournament tilting lance of the



VISCONTI PLATE ARMOUR IN THE HALL.

sixteenth century, and a two-handed sword of the reign of Francis I. Much of the wonderful collection was formed by Earl Somers, and many pieces came from the famous Meyrick collection. Very remarkable are thirty-three suits of plate armour worn by the body-guard of the Emperor Charles V.,

fine as will be found in England of the type. There is also much fine armour in the vestibule. Here also are beautiful cabinets, caskets, and chests, Flemish and Italian, with many family relics, and objects of historical interest. The pictures are chiefly altar-pieces from Italy, and include two exceedingly interesting Italian



THE DRAWING-ROOM.

and bought at Milan in 1853. Two cap-à-pie tilting suits of fluted armour, and a knight's suit with horse armour and trappings, which belonged to the Visconti family, are of very fine craftsmanship. The horse trappings of the Visconti knight are of velvet, much embroidered; and the whole suit, for horse and man, is as

examples, one being a St. Catherine by Giotto, which came from the Altoviti Chapel in San Marco, Florence.

The pictures are one of the great attractions of this storehouse of art. The principal portraits of the families of Cocks, Somers, Eliot, and Yorke are in the Dining Room, whose ceiling is painted



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*THE CASTLE HALL.*



THE SMALL LIBRARY.

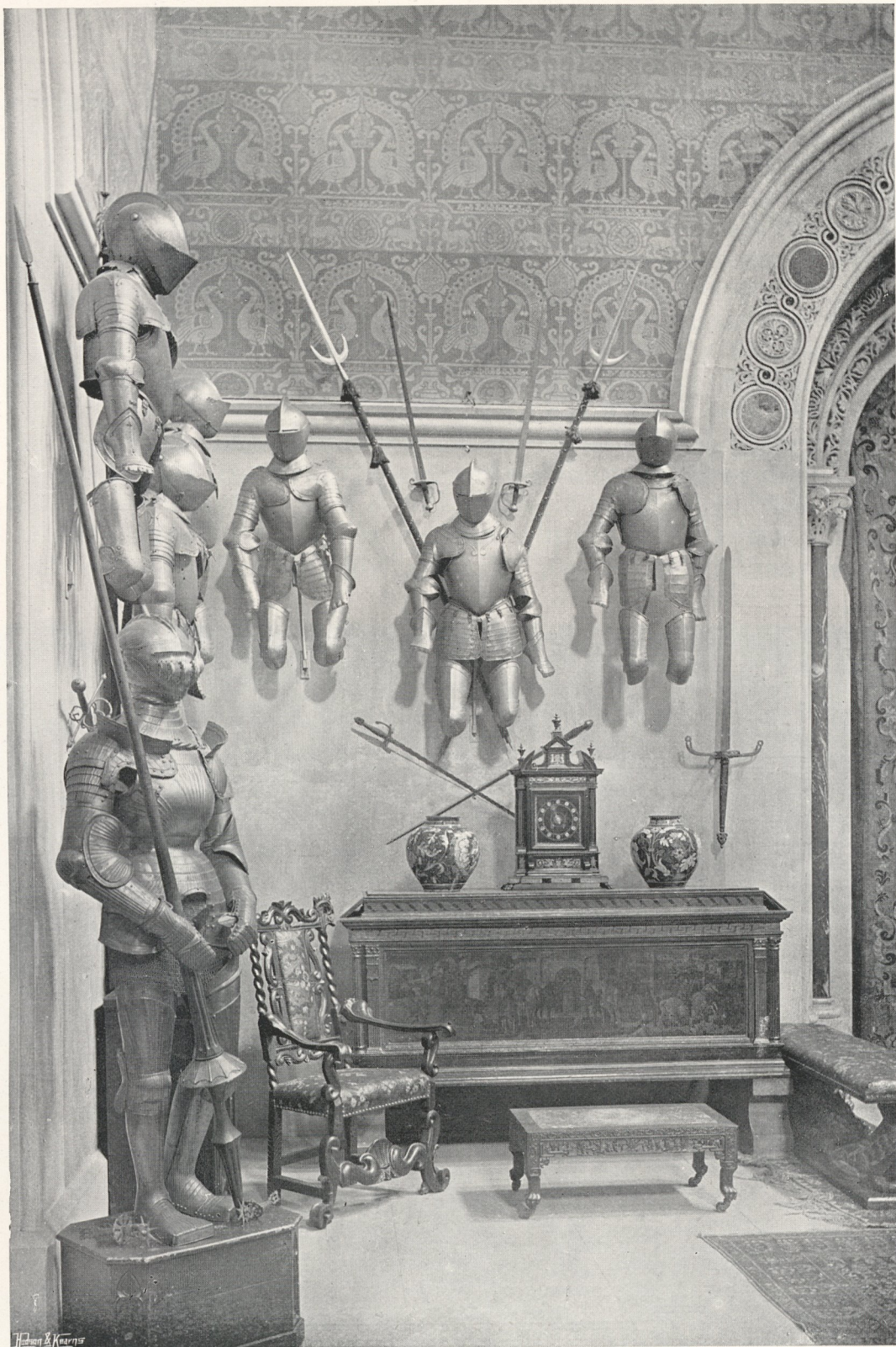
*TAPESTRY IN THE LIBRARY.*

with oleander and bay trees, these being varieties of the laurel, which is the Somers badge, and from the branches depend shields, the arms and quarterings of which show the family marriages from the time of Henry VII. to the present day. The portraits are of Sir Philip Yorke, first Earl of Hardwicke (1670), by Bliss; Mistress Judith Cocks (1638) and her husband, Richard Cocks, who first lived in the old house which preceded Eastnor Castle; John Lord Somers, Lord High Chancellor (1650 - 1716), by Kneller; William III., by Van Keulen; and there are examples of Kneller, Lely, and other artists.

The Drawing Room was decorated from the designs of Pugin, and bears every trace of his conscientious hand, and his mastery of the details of mediæval art. The fan tracery and the panelled roof are quite typical of his style, as is the richly sculptured fireplace, with the family tree above it, which shows the descent of the Earls Somers from the families of Plantagenet, Berkeley, Russell of Strensham, Treadway, and Nash. At either end of the room are fine pieces of tapestry, depicting "The Defeat of Darius" and "The Family of Darius Visiting Alexandria," both from the designs of Le Brun. Four other tapestry panels were given by Elizabeth Lady Hardwicke to her daughter Lady Catherine Somers. The magnificent chandelier is of brass, and of forty lights; it was designed by Pugin after a famous example in Nuremberg Cathedral.

In the Octagon Saloon are portraits of Algernon Sidney, Henrietta Maria, the Countess of Rochester, and other well-known people, the artists being Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Lely, Reynolds, Watts, and Raeburn. There are pictures also by great Italian masters like Ghirlandajo, Bellini, Gentile da Fabriano, and Tintoretto. The Library is also a noble room, richly designed, and beautifully adorned, containing

among its treasures the great collection of books made by Dr. Nash, the historian of Worcestershire. Above the books the walls of the Library are hung with Gobelin tapestry, which was taken from Fontainebleau during the three days' revolution, in the time of Louis Philippe, and is considered among the very best examples of Gobelin tapestry in England. The



FIFTEENTH CENTURY ARMOUR.

Small Library, the Inner Hall, wherein hang many famous pictures, and the corridors and other parts of the house contain many notable and beautiful works by great masters. The tapestry throughout is most beautiful, and in this respect Eastnor Castle has few rivals in England.