

WEST DEAN PARK, SUSSEX.

AMONG the beautiful houses of Western Sussex, in a district that includes Arundel, Goodwood, and Petworth, West Dean Park, the home of Mr. and Mrs. "Willie" James, is certainly one of the most desirable. There was an old house on the site built by the Lewknors in the reign of James I., but the estate passed into the hands of the family of Peachey towards the end of the eighteenth century, and the mansion was entirely rebuilt by Lord Selsey as a very beautiful and imposing edifice in 1804. It is constructed entirely of snapped flint, and presents a striking appearance, with a frontage of nearly 300ft. At one time, owing to the manor having a close connection with the Dean and Chapter of Chichester, the old place had been known as Canon House. The estate passed, through the marriage of Lord Selsey's daughter, into the possession of the Vernon Harcourt family, and from them it was purchased some thirty-two years ago by Mr. Frederick Bower, a very wealthy China merchant, who took the place exactly as it stood, and passed it on in the same condition to Mr. William James, who, while not interfering with any of the special characteristics of the house, greatly altered and improved it within and without. It is adorned with many notable pictures, with much splendid tapestry, and with the richest of carpets and hangings, and is a veritable storehouse of art. The structural features of the interior are admirable, and the fine panelling and admirable carving, both of wood and stone, will be seen in some of the pictures.

Although West Dean Park is situated only about a mile from the pretty little station of Singleton, the house, which is on the borders of the actual village of West Dean, is set in the midst of a very beautiful park and gardens, giving a delightful impression of solitude and peace. As is so often the case with Sussex manor houses, the most characteristic and notable apartment is the Hall, which has a panelled oak ceiling and a minstrels' gallery. Mr. James, who before his marriage was one of the most successful hunters of big game in the world, has placed his sporting trophies in the first hall. A quaint object, and one which immediately strikes the attention of every visitor, is a huge Polar bear, standing on his hind legs; while in an inner hall, which is a

recent acquisition obtained by throwing several small rooms into one, there is not only some very fine oak panelling, but some good armour and especially charming furniture, notably a genuine Sedan chair, and a very lovely Chippendale table. The workmanship is of notable character, and the whole effect both rich and harmonious.

A gallery runs the whole length of the house, which, in addition to some priceless pictures, is also hung with the famous tapestry which changed hands at the great Hamilton sale, but which looks as if it had really been made for the beautiful apartment where it is now displayed. It is evident that Mr. and Mrs. James are both very fond of this most lovely and peculiar type of art, for in the Entrance Hall is a splendid piece of tapestry, of which the subject—Atalanta—makes it of exceptional interest and value, though some may think that instead of the fleet-footed beauty, Artemis, the huntress, is depicted.

Both the great and small suites of reception-rooms, which make West Dean recall a foreign palace rather than an English country house, open from the corridor, the first of these apartments being the Dining Room, which contains, in addition to some very fine Italian sixteenth century portraits, some splendid examples of British art. Among these are several portraits by Sir Peter Lely, and a notable Charles I. by Mytens.

The Morning Room, the Library, and the Drawing Room all open out from one another, and form a charming suite of state rooms; here may be seen the perfection of eighteenth century and modern taste commingled. Within sight of the portraits of bygone beauties is a delightful painting by Mr. Edward Hughes of Mrs. James. The Library deserves special mention, for, in addition to all the ordinary classics, there is at West Dean a very fine collection of eighteenth century French works, and the English dramatists are especially well represented. This is as it should be, in view of the fact that Mrs. James is one of the best amateur actresses of the day.

The Drawing Room faces due south and west, and is, after the Hall, the most notable apartment in the house. Here Mr. James has gathered together some very exquisite Louis XV. furniture, including some rare and valuable specimens acquired when the late Lord Clifton's



THE HALL.



THE "ATALANTA" TAPESTRY IN THE ENTRANCE HALL.



THE HALL AND GALLERY.

and Mr. Cavendish Bentinck's collections were being broken up and disposed of to other art-lovers.

The apartment which used to be known as the Billiard Room in Mr. Bower's time, has been converted by Mr. James into a luxurious Smoking Room, divided by an oak arcade from the large new Billiard Room, which is lighted from the roof.

West Dean Park is one of the English country seats entirely lighted by electricity. This, of course, very much diminishes the danger of fire, and in the matter of electric light

fittings, as in everything else, admirable taste is clearly shown. It is no easy matter to adapt so modern an illuminant to a mansion which, though only a hundred years old, is filled with treasures, dating in some cases from the sixteenth century. The difficulty has, however, been successfully surmounted, and the great rooms look as well by night as they do by day, though, of course, only in gleaming sunlight are the beauties of the garden and the park seen to best advantage.

Very lovely is the arboretum, filled with rare and wonderful trees and plants. With a

wisdom not often shown by owners of great country places, the conservatories are placed some distance from the house, but it is, of course, thanks to the splendid glasshouses that Mrs. James is able to have her lovely country home filled, summer and winter, with exquisite

flowering shrubs and plants, a speciality being giant carnations and Bermuda lilies. Although the park is not of very great extent, it boasts, within its boundaries, miniature downs, woods, and coppices, and this makes the estate a peculiarly valuable one from a sporting point of view.



THE OAK STAIRWAY.