

BOWOOD, WILTSHIRE.

THE splendid seat of the Marquess of Lansdowne is notable among all the houses of Wiltshire. Of its history much might be said for which there is not space here.

A long description of the place is to be found in Britton's account of the shire (1814), speaking of the mansion as it then appeared; and, though at the present time we find vast changes in its outward aspect, and that many alterations and improvements have been made during intervening years, the original description of the house and its surroundings is sufficiently interesting and accurate for reproduction here.

The estate formed part of the old Forest of Bowood, which had a feudal history, and here King James I. often loved to chase the deer. When the district was disforested the lands were divided between the Lord Audley and a member of the ancient Devonshire family of

Carey. The mansion is situated about two miles from Calne and four from Chippenham. The park is of great extent, and the diversified undulations of hill and vale greatly enhance its beauties. A grand lake spreads its pellucid waters over a broad and irregular valley. The mansion consists of three distinct and different portions, which have been built at various times, and hence the whole presents an irregular and diversified mass of architectural parts. The chief building was erected by John Earl of Shelburne from the designs of the brothers Adam, and, as Britton says, like all of those architects' works, it had "rather the prettiness of a modern Italian villa than the simply dignified forms and features of a Palladian palace." The Dining Room and Saloon were spacious and rather noble, but the remainder, with the Entrance Hall, was comparatively small, and furnished with a profusion



THE ENTRANCE HALL.

of little ornaments. The builder was a man of much note. In 1751, as the Hon. John Fitzmaurice, he inherited the estates of his maternal uncle, Henry Petty, Earl of Shelburne, a title which was in a few years bestowed upon him as owner of the family estates, and the monument erected to his memory at Bowood fitly describes his admirable character. "Erected to the memory of John Petty, Earl of Shelburne, Viscount Fitzmaurice, Baron of Dunkeron in Ireland, and one of the Lords of Privy Council, Baron Wycombe of Chipping Wycombe, Great Britain. He was the son of Thomas Fitzmaurice, Earl of Kerry, to whom the titles of

grandfather, here alluded to, was a very remarkable man (born in 1623), described as a universal genius who distinguished himself at Oxford, Dublin, and London, and whose famous "Survey of Ireland" is a work of surprising merit and value.

The first Marquess of Lansdowne (second Earl of Shelburne) extended the buildings by adding a wing of great extent, the elevation of which is said to be in imitation of a wing of Diocletian's palace at Spalato. This forms the southern side of two quadrangular courts, which are surrounded by domestic offices. The third portion, to the north of the house, but connected



THE SOUTH END OF THE DRAWING-ROOM.

Kerry and Lixnaw had lineally descended through four-and-twenty generations, and of Ann, the only daughter of Sir William Petty, his Lady, Baroness of Shelburne. A man whom eminent faculties of mind never made ambitious; whom abundance of fortune never made despotic; whom extensive influence of power never made arrogant; who lived with no other endeavour than to advance the happiness of others by kindness and charity, and improve their sentiments by good example; who died with no wish to be remembered, but as a man of worth and a Christian of sincerity." He died in 1761, at the age of fifty-five, leaving two sons. Sir William Petty, his

with it, consists of a series of private apartments as distinguished from the principal part, which is appropriated to visitors. The principal front faces the south, and commands a rich and diversified prospect. It is ornamented with a large portico, supported by ten columns of the Doric order, with corresponding entablature, whence a pediment arises on which the family arms are sculptured in bold relief.

The Marquess of Lansdowne who thus gave Bowood its present palatial character, was the distinguished statesman of the reign of George III., whose whole interests were devoted to his country as a statesman and legislator. He



THE DINING-ROOM.

held most important offices in the State, and was always active in debate and foremost in the councils of the nation. In the earlier years of his life, as Lord Shelburne, he had served in the Guards and taken part in the expedition sent to the coast of France in 1758. In the interesting life of this

he was the finest statesman in Europe; certainly his name is found upon every page of the political history of those stormy days. He was Prime Minister in 1782, and when, advanced to the rank of marquess, there was an interesting correspondence between Lord Shelburne (as he then



THE LIBRARY CORRIDOR.

statesman, written by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, we have a minute account of all the political factions in which he was so deeply involved, and we read of his extreme unpopularity in the political world, though, on the contrary, his many admirers have recorded their opinion that

was) and Mr. Pitt concerning the possibility of the still higher honour of a dukedom being conferred. The title of Lansdowne was taken from some portion of the estates which he had acquired by his marriage with Lady Sophia Carteret. Deeply interested in literature and art, Lord Lansdowne



THE WEST LIBRARY.



THE EAST END OF THE DINING-ROOM.

was glad when a respite from the turmoils of political life enabled him to devote more time to the acquisition of vast treasures both of the painter's and the sculptor's art, as well as to collecting a most valuable library for Bowood, most of which was sold by his son and successor in 1805.

In Henry, third Marquess of Lansdowne, the traditions of this well-known peer as a statesman of great repute were revived. At the age of twenty-five he held the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and thence until the day of his death in 1863 he was the most prominent member of the old Whig Government, though always considered to be totally free from any party spirit, and a truly patriotic statesman. He was often pressed to accept the Premiership, but always declined, and he is also said to have refused a dukedom. Like his ancestor, the first Lord Lansdowne, he entertained the most eminent men of the day, whether famous in literature, art, or politics, and from all countries. Many were the social gatherings at Bowood in his time, and he was accustomed to say that on succeeding to the estates he found the rooms at Bowood literally stripped of all furniture, which had been sold by his half-brother the second Marquess, as well as of books, pictures, and the valuable Lansdowne Collection of MSS., which was purchased by the British Museum, leaving the house but an empty shell. He enriched the house, however, with a wonderful art collection, which includes many priceless gems of the great masters.

The work of regeneration went on, and nothing is now wanting to the charm of Bowood. What shall we say of its stately grandeur, with all the improvements of the last century? Time has but increased the beauty of its woodland scenery, where young plantations have grown to fine forest trees; and the gardens and pleasure grounds, more

carefully cultivated and more tastefully laid out, are among the most admired in the county. Successive owners have improved the interior arrangements to suit the requirements of the age, and modern decorators have given artistic softness to much that was hard and crude. The third Lord Lansdowne greatly enlarged and embellished the house, and collected nearly all the valuable treasures of art with which the rooms are enriched. There are pictures by the most celebrated painters of the Italian, Spanish, French, Flemish, and English schools. A magnificent Rembrandt hangs in the Drawing Room, and a Ruysdael is considered one of the finest pictures ever painted by that master. Salvator Rosa's portrait is by the great artist himself; Sir Joshua Reynolds is well represented by the famous "Strawberry Girl," a beautiful portrait of a lady in Turkish dress, an imaginary likeness of Dr. Johnson in infancy, and other works. Murillo, the Carracci, Luini, and Bassano, are also among the artists represented.

The pictures shall be left to describe the characteristic features of the house. There is pleasing originality in the Entrance Hall, with its classic arch, its balustered quadrant galleries in the angles, and its busts of statesmen in the niches. Such elegance and grace as belongs to the style of the Adam brothers and their followers is in the pleasing mantel of the Dining Room, and the graceful adornment of walls, cornice, and ceiling, and the beautiful pictures are worthily enframed. The Drawing Room, with its coved ceiling, is tastefully decorated in a similarly attractive manner. There is more, perhaps, of character in the noble Library, with its magnificent Raphael and other masterpieces. The ceiling has unusual features, its panels enclosing portraits of classic authors and other subjects. Description, however, shall not go further. Enough has been said to show how interesting in many ways is the Wiltshire house of Bowood.