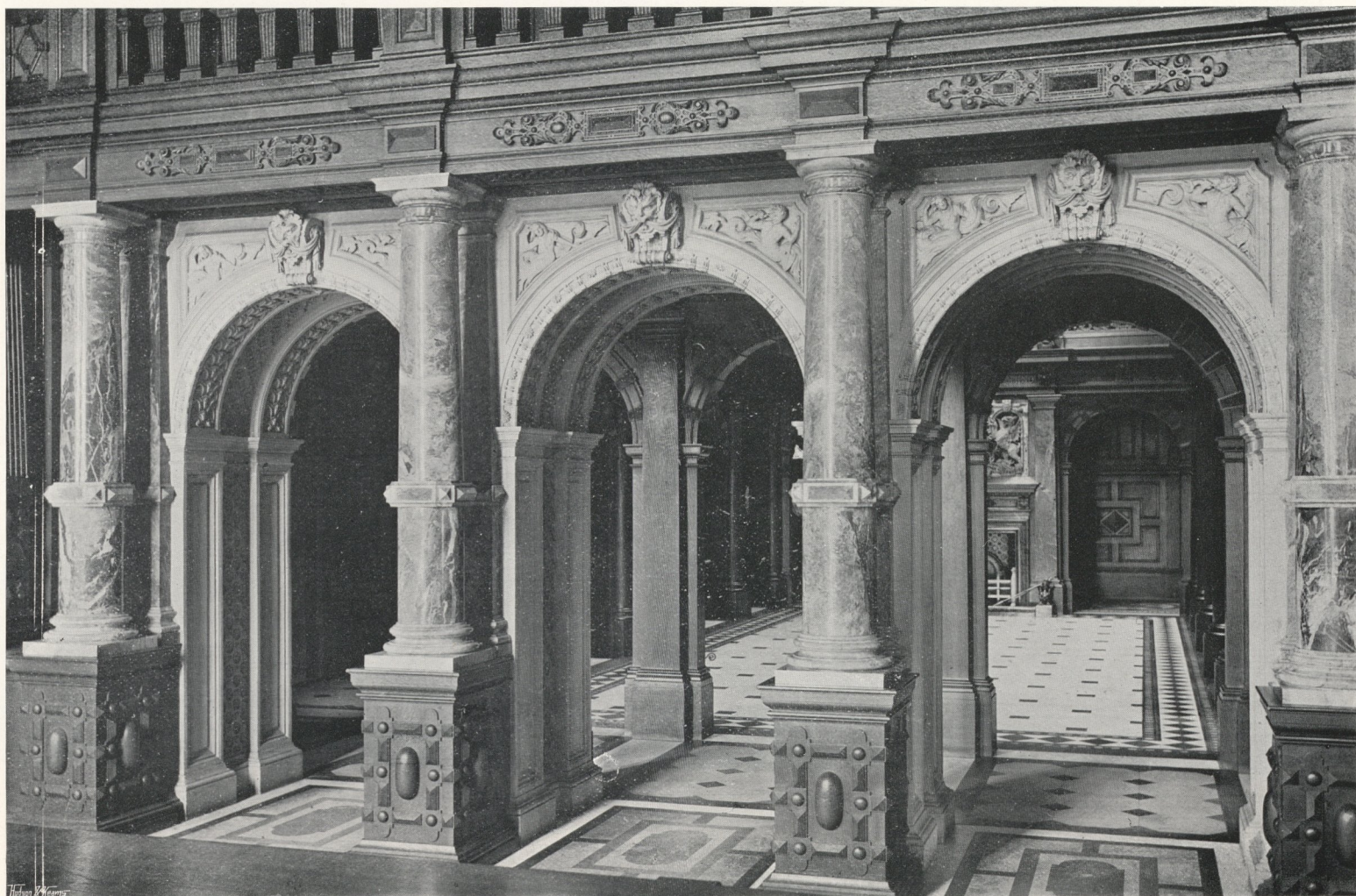


CREWE HALL, CHESHIRE.

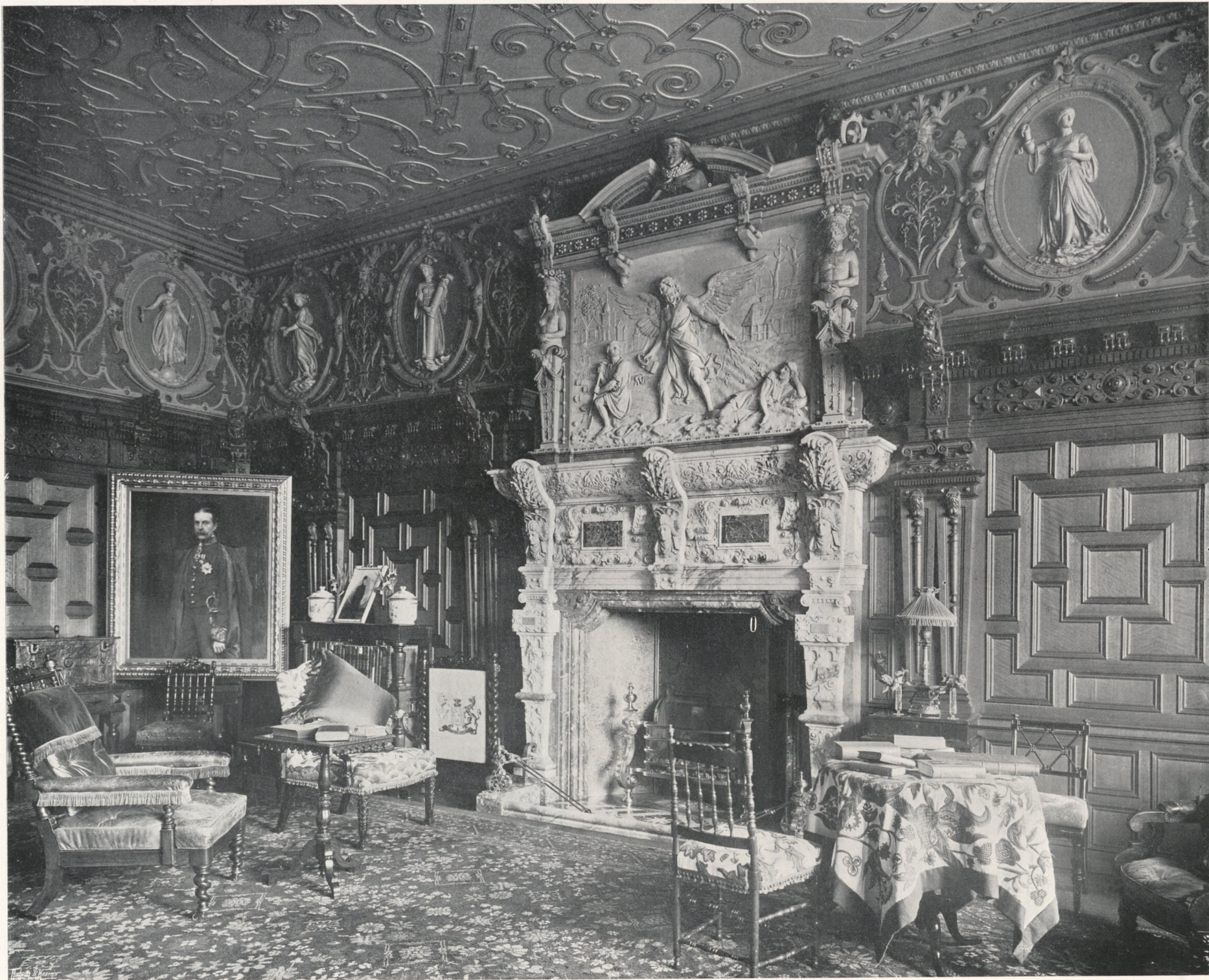
IT has been said many times of Crewe Hall, the stately Cheshire house of the Earl of Crewe, that it is one of the grandest examples of late Elizabethan or Jacobean domestic architecture and interior enrichment in England, and the pictures which accompany this article will enable many to appreciate the accuracy of the statement. They will say to themselves that England is fortunate in possessing glorious habitations like this. The manifest splendour of the house, the rare picturesqueness of its architecture, and the richness of its plenishings, the lovely elaboration of inlaid marble work, the examples of the unrivalled skill of workers in glass and metals—these all proclaim that Crewe Hall is, indeed, one of the finest places in the land. It is not, however—and we cannot but say it with regret—the same structure that stood on the site in Stuart days—at least, not entirely, nor even mostly. For fire visited with disastrous effect the old house at Crewe in 1866, and left but the shell remaining, out of

which has arisen, with splendour in those times undreamt of, the magnificent house we depict.

What kind of homestead was here, within these six miles of Nantwich, in ancient days it were bootless to enquire. But let us note that a family flourished which took its name from the place, concerning whose members veracious Ormerod gives many particulars in one of his mighty tomes of ponderous weight, and of learned authority where any question arises that relates to the genealogical lore of the shire. At the date of Domesday or shortly afterwards, Crewe seems to have been possessed by one Richard de Vernon, Baron of Shipbroke, and the Crewes who came later are said—though we will not vouch for the fact—to have been a branch of the great house of Montalt or De Monte Alto. The first Crewe to be noticed was Henry “de Criwa,” who flourished about the time of Henry III. At the end of the thirteenth century one Thomas de Crewe is recorded to have purchased the



THE MARBLE HALL.



THE CARVED PARLOUR.



THE LIBRARY.

lordship with other manors from Philippa, Countess of Warwick, but the estate passed through heiresses, and at length came by marriage to Sir Robert Foulshurst, who was an esquire to the Lord Audley at the battle of Poitiers. From this family Crewe passed by purchase to the famous Sir Christopher Hatton, and from him Sir Randal, or Ranulph, Crewe, Sergeant-at-law—who is believed to have been a descendant of the original family—bought the estate, and there built the mansion which still, in more glorious form, remains.

This notable builder, who lived from 1558 to 1646, was a remarkable man in his time. He became M.P. for Brackley, Northampton, in 1597, and afterwards was Speaker of the House of Commons, in which capacity it is on record that when, according to custom, he opened the Session of 1614, with an address, he enlarged upon the antiquity of the Royal pedigree, and gave to it a fabulous extension. He rose rapidly in the law, and ultimately became Chief Justice, after having been concerned in many *causes célèbres* of the age, including the somewhat famous examination under torture of Edmund Peacham in 1614-15, and the Oxford Peerage case. Although the Chief Justice was somewhat of a courtier, and might on occasions have "crooked the knee," there was much sturdy honesty and stout fibre in him, and he suffered for the too frank expression of his legal opinion in declining to acknowledge the legality of the forced loan.

The house which the Chief Justice built at Crewe, close to the older mansion of the Foulshursts, was a noble specimen of the time. Fuller says: "Nor must it be forgotten that Sir Randal first brought the model of excellent building into these remote parts; yea, brought London into Cheshire, in the loftiness, sightliness, and pleasantness of the structures."

It has been asserted that Sir Ranulph Crewe's house was designed by Inigo Jones, but, knowing how many false ascriptions have been made to that eminent architect, we should hesitate to proclaim the fact. However that may be, the mansion, which was built about 1636, half a century after Longleat, was a structure of very fine character. It was mostly of red brick, with other bricks of darker colour, breaking up the surface into a kind of lozenge pattern, and the quoins and dressings were of stone. There were two lofty storeys, surmounted by a perforated parapet, having bays rising to the roof, with many mullioned windows, and the house was crested by curvilinear gables.

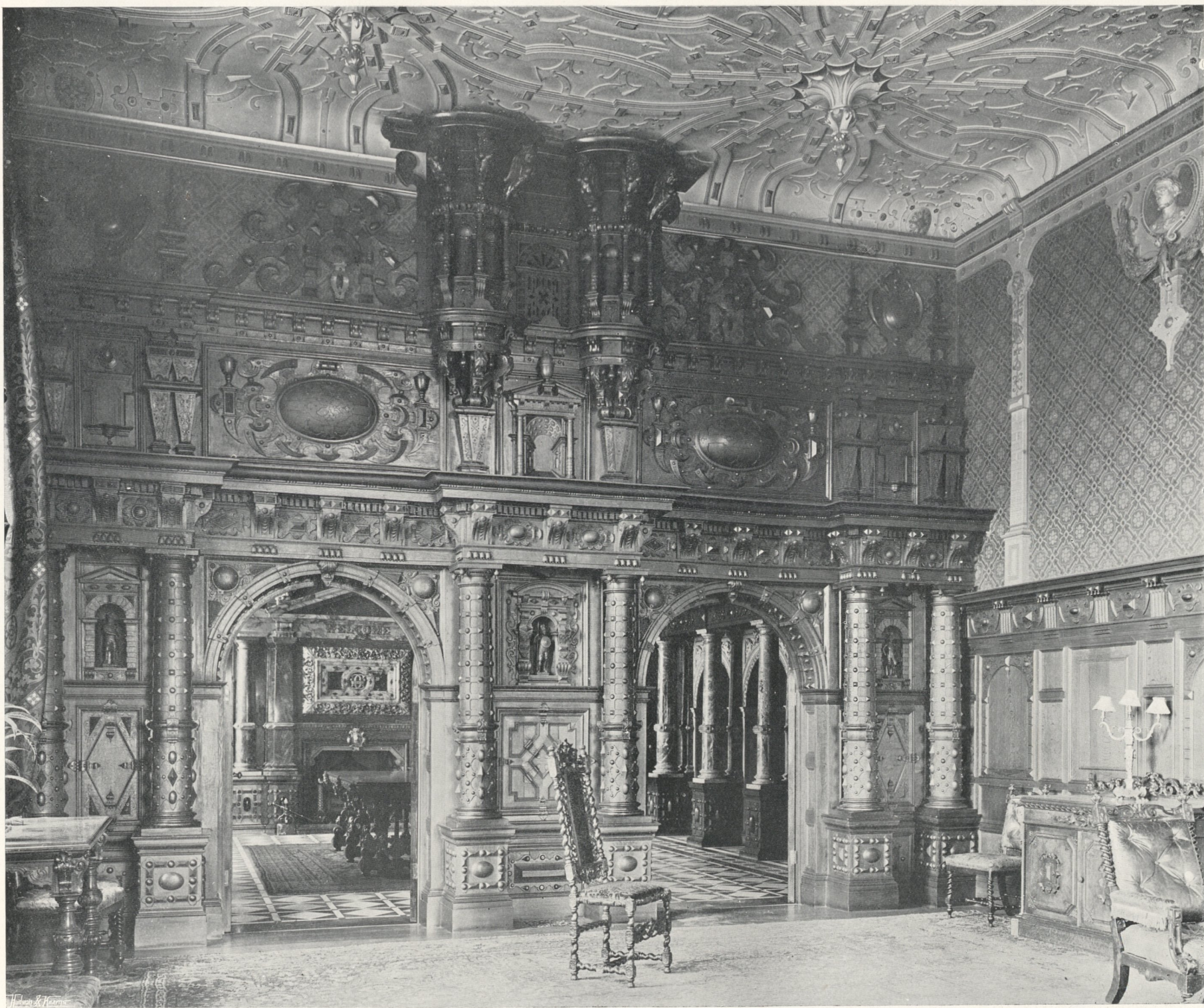
Like many other great mansions, Crewe Hall played its part in the Civil War, being garrisoned for the Parliament, but was taken by Lord Byron with his Irish "Tories" in December, 1643. Happily, the house did not greatly suffer in the broil. Changes were, nevertheless, to come over it. There is a notable passage in Crewe's address

upon the great Oxford Peerage case, decided in 1625, which deserves to be quoted here as a jewel of oratory, while we are speaking of the changes that were to pass over Crewe Hall. "Where is Bohun? Where is Mowbray? Where is Mortimer? Nay, which is more and most of all, where is Plantagenet? They are entombed in the urns and sepulchres of mortality. And yet, let the name and dignity of De Vere stand so long as it pleaseth God." The Chief Justice lived to an advanced age, and the estates remained in his family until the elder daughter, and eventually sole heiress, of John Crewe married John Offley, a member of an ancient Staffordshire family, whose son John took the name of Crewe by Act of Parliament in 1708. A celebrated member of the family was Nathaniel, third and last Lord Crewe of Stene, Bishop of Durham, who, after being an ardent supporter of the Stuarts, made his peace with the Prince of Orange, and was not deprived of his bishopric. He was a great benefactor to Lincoln College, Oxford, and spent large sums in improving the palace at Durham.

The fire of 1866 came, and swept most of the beauties away. It is said that the Lord Crewe of the time was a man of great *sang froid*, and that, while his ancient house was in flames, he ordered a table to be placed on the lawn, and then and there wrote a telegram for his architect: "Crewe is burning; come and build it up again." Under the judicious direction of Lord Crewe, the house rose with a magnificence which the pictures will suggest. The details of the old architecture were minutely reproduced, the enlargements were in perfect taste, and it is now scarcely possible to tell where the old and the new are united.

Now let us turn to the interior. The Entrance Hall, with rich panelling and a fine sculptured mantel-piece in alabaster, is a noble introduction to the great Marble Hall, with its arcade, upper loggia, and open roof—truly a grand apartment. The Oak Parlour has lovely panelling and fine pictures, and the Grand Staircase is a magnificent example. It is carved in oak, with heraldic and mythical animals on the pillars, and has won the admiration of all architects for its admirable plan and details. The Carved Parlour is another glorious apartment, with a magnificent fireplace of alabaster, and bas-reliefs in panels below the great strapwork ceiling. As its name implies, it is noted for the amount of lovely and unique carving. The most remarkable feature is a frieze, which, placed just below the ceiling, brings out the wonderful proportions of the apartment. The frieze consists of elaborately carved oak, enriched at certain intervals by medallions containing graceful figures representing the Graces, the Seasons, and the Virtues, each in high relief.

The Drawing Room is a great and stately place, hung with fine works by Reynolds and other artists, and glorious in its elaboration of



THE SCREEN IN THE DINING-ROOM.



THE STAIRCASE.

rich detail. The chimney-piece reaches to the ceiling, and is formed of coloured marbles, of onyx, and of jasper, while about it is much elaborate gilding. Over the hearth is carved the Crewe motto, "Sequor nec inferior." In the Drawing Room also is kept the silver

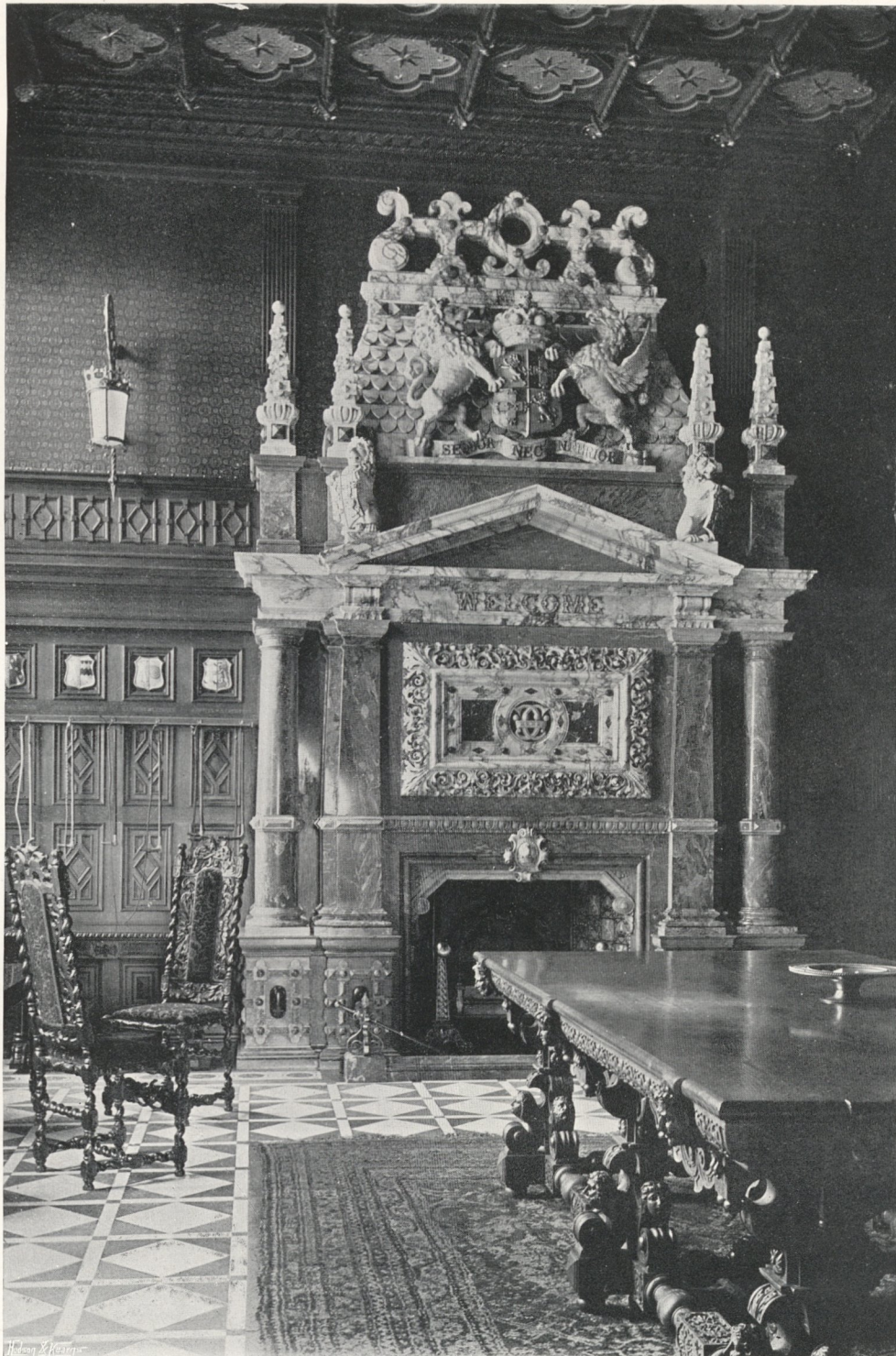
salver on which some refreshment was handed to the great Lord Strafford just before his execution.

The Library, again, is a splendid room, with fluted Ionic pillars flanking the fireplace, and carved panels over them, while busts are

in lunettes, and the whole is crowned with a magnificent ceiling, every detail of the design being suggestive of literary taste and the book-lover's zeal.

The Dining Room is very remarkable, and has, in the ancient way, a dais and oriel, and, at the lower end, a magnificent carved screen of oak, over which, originally, would probably have been a minstrels' gallery. Here would be communication through a buttery hatch with the domestic offices, and the room may now be described as a perfect example of its kind. But, perhaps, the noble Long Gallery, which is over 100ft. in length, is the most characteristic apartment in this splendid abode. Such a chamber was in every great house. In the gallery at Crewe many choice pictures are hung, and the panelling and enrich-

ments are extraordinarily beautiful. The fireplace and mantel are a magnificent example of the sculptor's and marble-worker's skill, and the elaborate variety of substances used in the composition, the richness of the carving, and the very characteristic way in which the busts of Chief Justice Crewe and Bishop Crewe are enframed, mark the lavish care which has been bestowed upon this wonderful work. The words "Quid retribuam Domino," which, with the motto "Sequor nec inferior," are in many parts of the structure, are embodied in this design. The busts are by Weekes, while the bas-relief of a scene from "The Tempest" in the Drawing Room is by Armstead. Enough has been said to show that Lord Crewe's mansion in Cheshire is one of the finest places we should wish to discover.



CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE RECEPTION-ROOM.