

CASSIOBURY PARK, HERTFORDSHIRE.

HERTFORDSHIRE, long famed for the beauty and splendour of its country seats, has few which can compare with the Earl of Essex's estate of Cassiobury, near the picturesque town of Watford. The estate passed into the hands of the Capell family at a comparatively recent date—that is to say, early in the seventeenth century, when the first Lord Capell, who was beheaded for his devotion to Charles I., married Elizabeth, the only daughter and heiress of Sir Charles Morrison, of Cassiobury. The Capells have been distinguished as soldiers, sailors, statesmen, and diplomatists. The first Lord Capell was beheaded on March 9th, 1649, and his devotion did not go unrewarded, for

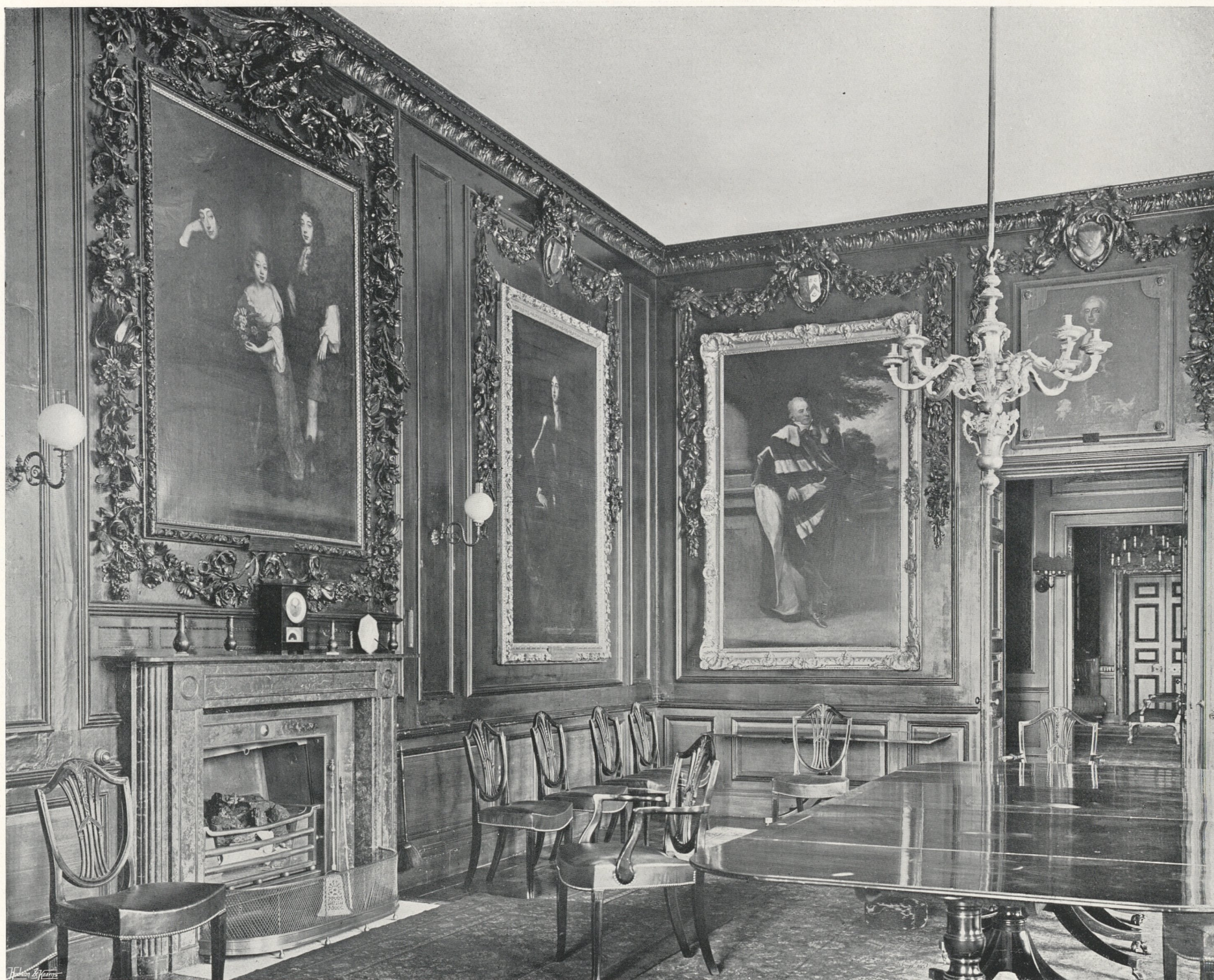
his son was created Earl of Essex at the Restoration. Among the many interesting Stuart relics at Cassiobury, none arouses more reverent interest than does a portion of the velvet pall used at the strange, hurried funeral of Charles I. ; while much pathos attaches to two other precious relics : a piece of the ribbon of the Garter worn by him on the scaffold, and a locket with his hair, cut off after death. Charles II. was fickle in his friendships, and after loading the first Earl of Essex with honours, he made him a prisoner in the Tower, accusing him, with Lord Russell, of being concerned in the Rye House Plot. Shortly after his commitment Lord Essex was found with his throat cut,



THE BILLIARD-ROOM IN THE CLOISTERS.



A CORNER OF THE LARGE DINING-ROOM.



CASSIOBURY PARK.

THE LARGE DINING-ROOM.

presumably as the result of some foul play. The family ultimately abandoned the cause of the Stuarts, and the second, third, and fourth Earls played a considerable part in public life under the Georges.

more than one occasion, and after the death of William IV it was let by Lord Essex to the Dowager Queen Adelaide, by whom and her suite it was occupied for some time. This adds another historical interest to the place,



THE GREAT LIBRARY.

Cassiobury, being only fifteen miles from London, combines the advantages of the metropolis without forfeiting those of the country. According to tradition Queen Elizabeth visited it on

especially as during Queen Adelaide's tenancy of Cassiobury the house was visited by most of the notable people of the day, including the Iron Duke.



THE SMALL DINING-ROOM.

The mansion was built by Hugh May for the first Earl of Essex, and a wing remains with a ceiling by Verrio, as well as a part of the older structure, but the main portion was built by James Wyatt in 1800. Many are the memories of Court and Society that linger about old Cassiobury. The late Lord Essex possessed it for over fifty years, and few men played a more distinguished part in the social history of the mid-Victorian era. He entertained at his beautiful country house all the political, social, and even theatrical celebrities of the day, and many interesting mementos of him are still to be found in the house.

The main staircase is one of the finest in England, and, indeed, very few Continental palaces can boast of so elaborately carved and splendid an ascent. It is bold, beautiful, and almost unrivalled in the glorious sculpture of its balustrade. One or two other staircases of comparable character are depicted in these pages, but that of Cassiobury is not excelled. The walls are richly adorned with fine family portraits of dead and gone Capells.

The Dining Room is a magnificent apartment with richly-hued panelled walls, and is of interest to art-lovers as having been ornamented throughout by Grinling Gibbons, who contributed his masterpieces to Cassiobury; indeed, there is scarcely a room which does not show a more or less elaborate and beautiful specimen of his craftsmanship. The grand portraits which adorn the room have been enwreathed by his glorious work. Festoons of flowers and fruit, which Nature could scarce excel, hang in graceful pendent fashion about them. There are shields of arms above, serving as the centres from which these wreaths begin, and they are looped up at the corner of each of the noble pictures. These include Van Dyck's fine portrait of Algernon, tenth Earl of Northumberland, a portrait of his daughter Elizabeth, who married the first Earl of Essex, also delightful portraits of the fifth Earl of Essex and his Countess by Hoppner, and several other interesting works.

The Small Dining Room is also embellished with a good deal of beautiful carving, notably over the mantel-piece. In this room is kept a quaint old-fashioned green leather chair, once the property of David Garrick. On the walls hang some good water-colours; and an interesting relic of the last owner is a long, low bookshelf filled with useful volumes concerning farming.

The Great Library is a noble room, stored with a vast collection of works on the classics, history, topography, and the stage. Over the fireplace hangs an admirable Reynolds of a previous Earl of Essex as a boy, with his sister, in a landscape, enframed with some magnificent carving by Grinling Gibbons. Here, also, are portraits of Lord Capell of Tewkesbury; Jane Hyde, wife of William, third Earl of

Essex; the second Earl of Clarendon and his lady; Lady Charlotte Hyde, daughter of Henry, Earl of Clarendon; Lady Mary Bentinck, wife of the second Earl of Essex; John, Duke of Bedford, and Gertrude, Duchess of Bedford; with many more. There are three fine libraries, which contain, in addition to thousands of rare and interesting English and French literary treasures, a number of unique relics of a bygone day.

In the Inner Library is a magnificent buhl table, a true museum specimen, which was purchased, together with a great deal of other valuable French furniture, by the fifth Earl of Essex, who happened to be in France during the stormy later days of the Revolution, when such art treasures were acquired for comparatively little, and the splendid furniture is now one of the great charms of Cassiobury. Here, also, are fine family portraits, including examples of Reynolds, and almost as interesting as the portraits is exquisite Grinling Gibbons carving, in admirable harmony with the chimney-piece, ornamented by the same famous craftsman.

In yet another library is stored a marvellous collection of books relating to the British stage, of which the nucleus was formed by that Countess of Essex who was once Miss Kitty Stephens, while a series of beautiful eighteenth century portraits enlivens the character of the apartment. Below the impressive portrait of William III. has been kept, carefully preserved in a case, the blood-stained handkerchief with which Lord Coningsby stanching the wound of his Sovereign at the Battle of the Boyne. One of the most interesting pictures in the house is a portrait of King Henry IV., doubtless an ancient copy of the picture at Windsor.

Tokens of Royal friendship abound at Cassiobury, and an old warming-pan is said to have been a present from Queen Elizabeth. A bust of Mme. du Barry testifies to that unfortunate woman's gratitude for the fifth Earl's kindness in conducting her to England on the outbreak of the Revolution. It was the same nobleman who brought back Hubert's picture of "The Philosopher" from Geneva. He became and remained the devoted friend of Sheridan, who often enlivened the stately rooms of Cassiobury with flashes of his Irish wit. Hidden away in some of the lovely cabinets, which are so very numerous in the house, are valuable autographs and manuscripts offering testimony to the interest ever taken by the Capell family in art and letters.

The Drawing Rooms have been very little altered during the last hundred years—indeed, it used to be said that the green silk hangings of the Great Drawing Room had not been renewed since the Regency; and it would be difficult to imagine a better background for the lovely landscapes which form the principal ornamentation of the walls, though here, as in every apartment at Cassiobury, are also some fine family portraits,

including about fifty miniatures enclosed in cabinets of rare French manufacture.

The State Bedroom recalls some of the finest rooms of Versailles and the Louvre, splendid Beauvais tapestry being a marked feature of the

taste and wealth can do having been there expended. Some lovely Bartolozzi prints, and many interesting portraits of past and contemporary beauties, smile upon the walls.

The cloisters, though comparatively modern,



THE STAIRWAY

ornamentation, while the furniture accompanying it is of Louis Quinze and Louis Seize character.

Lady Essex's pretty suite of rooms is in curious contrast to the rest, being a quaint mixture of ancient and modern, everything that

are mediæval in character, and surround a grass plot which is said to have been once the Abbot's garden. During the last few years a portion of the cloisters has been transformed into a luxurious Billiard Room, and here, as in every room at

Cassiobury, are many valuable relics and portraits. A most interesting Henry VII. and a half-length of Elizabeth of York, which attracted much attention at the Tudor Exhibition, must not be forgotten.

The park and gardens of Cassiobury have long been famed for their extraordinary beauty, and it may be added that they rank with the best examples of stately gardening in the world.

The grounds were planted by Moses Cook, author of "Forest Trees" (1675), for the first Earl of Essex, and Evelyn commends them. The names of Le Nôtre and Rose have been mentioned as having worked at Cassiobury, but there is no evidence of the fact. The glorious lime avenue which stretches through Cassiobury Park to the Hemel Hempstead Road is known to have been planted by Cook.