

did a very great deal to embellish The Vyne, and added to it statuary and various works of art. Living at the Casa Ambrosio in Florence, the house of Sir Horace Mann, the British Minister, he met, in 1740, Horace Walpole and Gray. The acquaintance ripened into intimacy and friendship, and Chute is constantly referred to in Walpole's letters. Walpole greatly admired him, and wrote to Mann, in October, 1747: "If I were to say all I think of Chute's immense honesty, his sense, his worth, his knowledge, and his humanity, you would think I was writing a dedication."

Walpole was frequently at The Vyne, and took much interest in the work going on there.

He presented to Mr. Chute, about 1745, the two stone eagles which now flank the entrance; and the friends often resorted to the beautiful old summer-house, which they used as a Temple of the Muses. It would appear that the magnificent Corinthian staircase, with the elegant fluted columns, the balustrade, and the richly-adorned ceiling, all admirably proportioned, which Mr. Chute himself designed, was carried on with the advice of Walpole, although it was somewhat alien to his taste. He constantly suggested embellishments for the house and garden, and for the addition of sculpture and paintings. The brilliant letter-writer seemed, indeed, to have had some sense of proprietorship, and was rather irritated at his friend's hesitation to carry out certain of his suggestions. He intensely admired the Tudor Chapel, and frequently alludes to it. In his "Anecdotes of Painting," he refers to the principal work of his friend as "the theatric staircase designed and just erected by John Chute," but, in a manuscript description of the house, he speaks of Chute as "an able geometrician, and an exquisite architect, both in the Grecian and Gothic style," and says, "he erected from his own design the beautiful scenery of the staircase with its two vestibules." Chute never married, and died at The Vyne in May, 1776.

On his death the estate passed by will to his cousin Thomas Lobb, who assumed the name of Chute, and the latter's son, William John Chute, succeeded to The Vyne in 1790. He was a man

of mark, whose name is honoured in his shire, his chief distinction being that he maintained, until his death in 1824, at his own cost, the well-known pack of the Vyne Hounds. He was an ardent sportsman, kept both horses and hounds, and at The Vyne may still be seen a portrait of New Forest Jasper, one of the sires of the pack. Mr. Chute used to say, "as distinguished families had the portraits of their distinguished ancestor, the judge, or the general, or the statesman, in their rooms, he did not see why dogs should not have their family pictures also." The Duke of Wellington, when he went to Strathfieldsaye, was a well-known member of the Hunt. Mr. Chute was not, however,

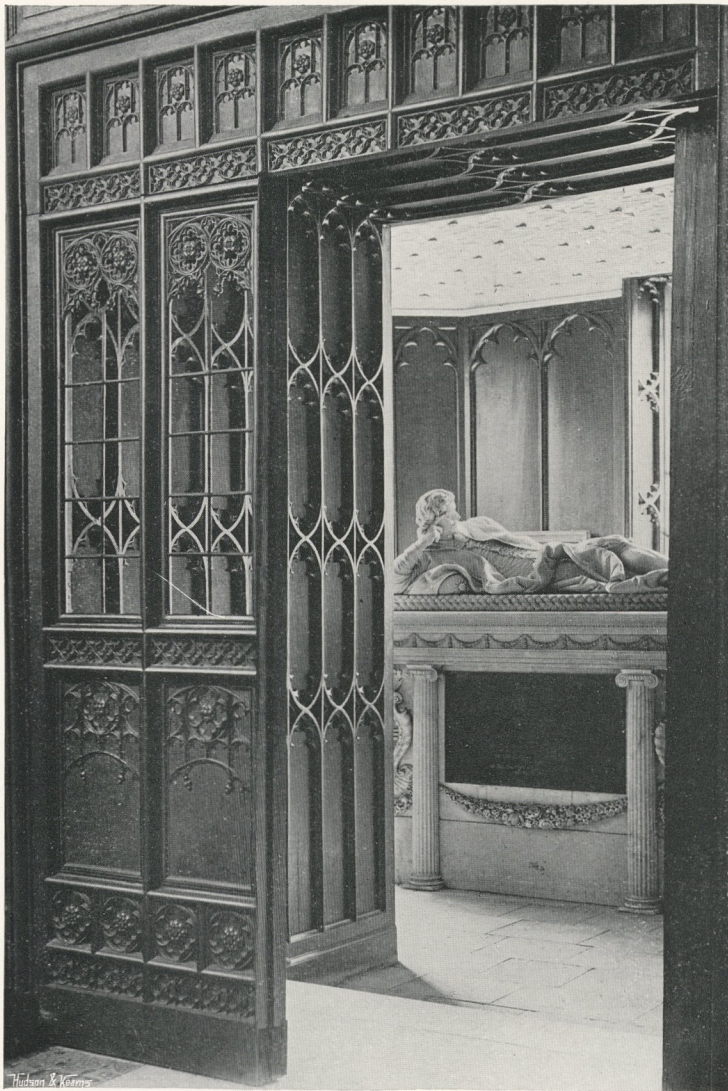
merely a fox-hunting squire. He represented his county in Parliament, and was a man of marked individuality and independence of character.

Neither he nor his brother ever married, and the estate passed by will to William Lyde Wiggett, a cousin of their mother, who assumed the name and arms of Chute. This gentleman enlarged the old mansion, and enriched it with some valuable works of art. His son, Mr. Chaloner W. Chute, a gentleman of great attainments, did good service by writing an account of his historic home, from which some of these notes are derived.

In recounting the history of the house, it has been partly described under the periods of its erection, and not much remains to be said.

Originally, on the right

of the entrance hall, according to the ancient manner of building, was a large dining-hall, and there was a private dining-chamber for Lord Sandys and his family and friends. On the left of the hall is the Print Room, so called from prints hung there about the year 1815. Beyond this is the Strawberry Parlour, with oak paneling, thus named in honour of Horace Walpole. The Stone Gallery on the west side, under the long Oak Gallery, is also a notable apartment, and contains several fine portraits, and many Roman remains and busts. Over the mantel, in relation to the conjectured origin of the name of the house, is a medallion of the Emperor Probus, who is said to have introduced vine-growing into this country. The gallery leads



THE CHAPEL AND THE TOMB.