

piece. We do not know anywhere so remarkable a work. The features are both bold and delicate, and were sculptured by a master hand. Here is the taste of Italy in the richest period of Renaissance design brought into a mediæval English house. On either side are two caryatid figures supporting the enriched cornice, which has also, as an important feature, a grotesque head below it in the middle, forming a characteristic bracket. Above this cornice rises to the ceiling the upper stage of the mantel. Over the supporting figures



THE CHIMNEY-PIECE OF 1598.

on either side are niches, each between two elaborated Corinthian columns, while in the middle, rising from the projecting portion of the cornice over the bracket, is a singular figure of Pan. In the niches on either side are Prudentia and Justitia, the latter with the scales, and on either side of Pan are other niches, round-arched, in which are Arithmetica, writing in a book, and Geometria with some instruments of the geometrical art. Moral maxims are below with enriched panelling, and above is an elaborate

architrave. This work belongs to that great period in which Englishmen engaged in honourable rivalry with one another in their efforts to beautify and adorn their country houses, and were enraptured with the spirit of Continental design. Very often foreign workmen were employed, which may well have been the case at Wraxall.

Another remarkable feature is a very unusual projection opposite to the fireplace, which has two storeys, the lower one having fluted Ionic piers and recesses or niches, with shell arching at the top. Above this rises to the ceiling enriched panelling, all of most admirable craftsmanship. The effect of this feature is to give quaint variety to the room, and the recesses were perhaps intended to serve as seats. In any case the architect and the craftsman worked successfully together. We can conceive with what satisfaction the possessor saw all this completed, and can picture the gay scene when there, with his lady, he welcomed his friends. It will be noticed in the pictures that the furniture is singularly choice and quite in the Chippendale character, with extreme fineness and delicacy as well as reserve in its workmanship.

Much in the same style, though with many differences, are other chambers in the house. Dame Eleanor's Room has a magnificent mantel-piece, also in two stages, with coupled columns at either side, and strapwork pattern panels and floral adornments above, and the workmanship is scarcely surpassed anywhere. The same character is found in the Guest Chamber, which has a magnificent stone chimney-piece of bold, simple, and original character. The fluted piers, the ornamental panels, the brackets, and the cornice, with its singular ropework pattern and its dentils, are all most admirable.

We illustrate one other apartment, known as the Raleigh Room, to which reference has already been made, and concerning which there is a most interesting tradition. It is said that here Sir Walter Long and Sir Walter Raleigh used to meet and talk while they smoked out of silver pipes, and that South Wraxall Manor House is the first English house in which tobacco was used. Many, of course, are the anecdotes concerning the introduction of the fragrant weed, as for example that Raleigh smoked his first pipe on an island rock in one of the lower reaches of the Dart. The fireplace