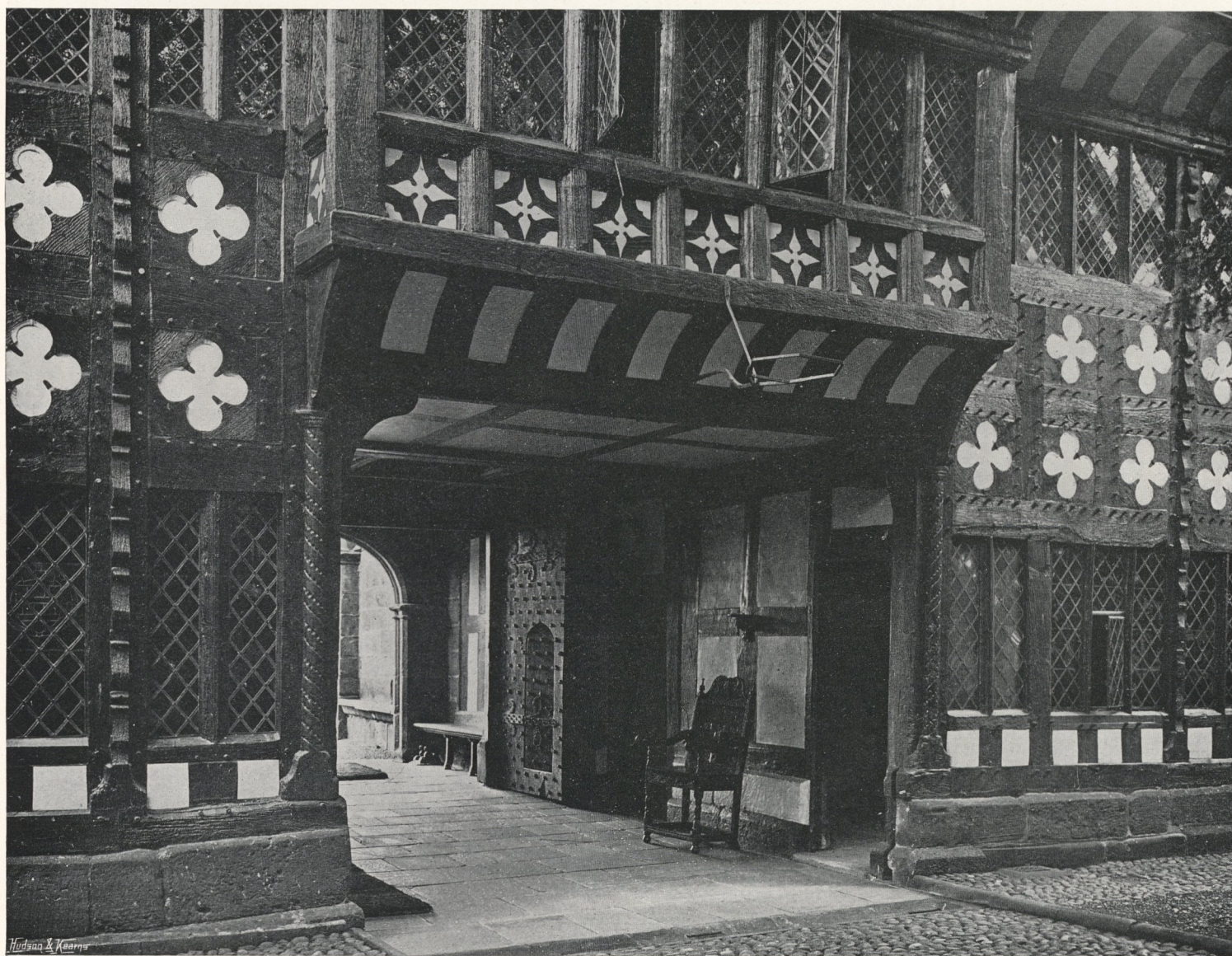


SPEKE HALL, LANCASHIRE.

SPEKE HALL in Lancashire, the famous mansion standing near the estuary of the Mersey, is one of the most interesting houses in England, representative of the timber edifices in which our ancestors lived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though it really dates in part from the end of the century before. Begun in 1490, to replace the older house that had sheltered the Norris family for two and a-half centuries, it was not completed before 1605, and now after 300 years it is nearly as perfect as it was then, and, thanks to the family of the present owner, we may hope it will so remain for some centuries more. The wood used throughout was English oak, well jointed and pegged together, now scarred and seamed by the suns and storms of centuries. When John Leland, the antiquary of King Henry VIII., went to

various seats in Lancashire, and visited the house of Sir William Leyland, presumably his kinsman, at the Morleys, near Leigh, he described it as "builded, saving the foundation of stone squared that riseth within a great moat a six feet above the water, all of timber, after the common sort of building of houses of gentlemen for most of Lancashire." Such a house, retaining all its characteristics, is Speke Hall. Extraordinary quaintness is in the overhanging gables, enriched with splendid barge-boards and finials, and most picturesque is the treatment of the structural timber framework, diversified by the introduction of quatrefoils and other adornments. In this the house is like many others in Lancashire and Cheshire. The moat has long been drained, but the stone bridge remains, a marvel of picturesqueness, and all the details of



THE ENTRANCE GATE FROM WITHIN THE QUADRANGLE.