

heavily mortgaged the property, which was sold by the grandson of Mary Norris in 1795 to Richard Watt, of Oak Hill, Liverpool, and of Bishop Burton, Yorkshire. Structurally the house was not harmed, and was again cared for, preserved, and beautified, and became a centre of antiquarian interest.

The entrance bridge is a fine feature, and there are pleasant seats in the recesses and in the quaint open porch leading through the archway to the massive entrance doors. Within the courtyard we are first impressed by the two noble yew trees which shade the whole of it, and by their character maintain the old-world spell. It is particularly worthy of note that the buildings surrounding the quadrangle are so

square panels, which again are sub-divided diagonally. A passage or lobby, as is usual, separates the Hall from the Kitchen offices, and the dais, or place for the high table, is at the further end, where a half-octagon bay looks into the courtyard. The length of the Hall at Speke is 41ft. 3in., but originally it was 10ft. longer. Probably in the seventeenth century the chimney-breast was brought forward, and curiously embattled and moulded work was carried up to the ceiling. At the same time the minstrels' gallery facing the high table was panelled off. The breadth is 34ft. 6in. without the bays, and Speke appears to be the widest of all the Lancashire halls. It will be seen how charming a place is the octagonal bay,



*THE NORTH-EAST GALLERY.*

arranged that all the rooms look out upon the open country, and that the corridors running round the courtyard and giving admission to these rooms are well lighted by numerous latticed windows on both floors. On the left are the old Chapel, Kitchen, and offices; on the right the Library and other rooms; and the noble bay window of the Great Hall is a prominent object opposite.

The position of the Great Hall facing the main entrance is quite characteristic of houses of the time. Constructed in the middle of the sixteenth century, it closely resembles the halls at Houghton Tower, Rufford, and some other places, and, like the first of these, has a flat ceiling, divided by deeply-moulded beams into

which was commonly used as a boudoir for the ladies. Here is old armorial glass, and a beautiful pattern of vine leaves divides the upper range of lights from the lower. From the central boss of the ceiling of each bay hangs the very unusual feature of a chandelier carved in oak, while a larger one formerly hung from the centre of the Hall. Another bay faces the one last described, and overlooks the garden. It has a separate fireplace, and doubtless could be screened off as a distinct apartment. Between the two bays and behind the position of the high table is the elaborate panelling some portion of which was probably brought from Holyrood, as has been mentioned. It is manifestly later than much of the other carving,