

COMBE ABBEY, WARWICKSHIRE.

IN a hollow between a grassy, well-timbered park and a stretch of woodland, the stones of Combe Abbey were first laid as long ago as the reign of King John, for the benefit of a community of Cistercian monks, then an order barely a hundred years old, with the severest of rules and discipline. The graves and stone coffins of some of the monks have been discovered in the park, but of the Abbey there is nothing remaining, save an ambulatory or cloister open to the air, which has been carefully restored and well preserved. Combe shared the fate of other religious houses under Henry VIII., and fell into lay hands while retaining its monastic title. Late in the reign of Elizabeth it again changed owners, and in the early part of the next century was in possession of Lord Harrington, in whose household James I., after the custom of those times, wished his only daughter, Princess Elizabeth, to be educated. At Combe the Princess spent her childhood and early girlhood, and there she wrote many letters, which are still preserved, to her favourite brother, the short-lived Henry, Prince of Wales (died 1612). In her seventeenth year Elizabeth married Frederick V., Elector Palatine of the Rhine, afterwards, by election, King of Bohemia, and all through her troubled and stormy life, whether at the petty Court at Heidelberg, or reigning at Prague, or crownless, penniless,

and in exile in Holland, she kept before her eyes the memory of the home where her peaceful childhood was spent. Years later, in the evening of her days, when her nephew Charles II. was restored to his throne, she returned to England, and her faithful friend, Sir William Craven, bought Combe for her from the creditors of Lucy Countess of Bedford, the daughter and heiress of Lord Harrington. But Elizabeth was not destined to realise her dream. Before the enlargements and embellishments of the house were completed she



THE STATE BEDROOM.