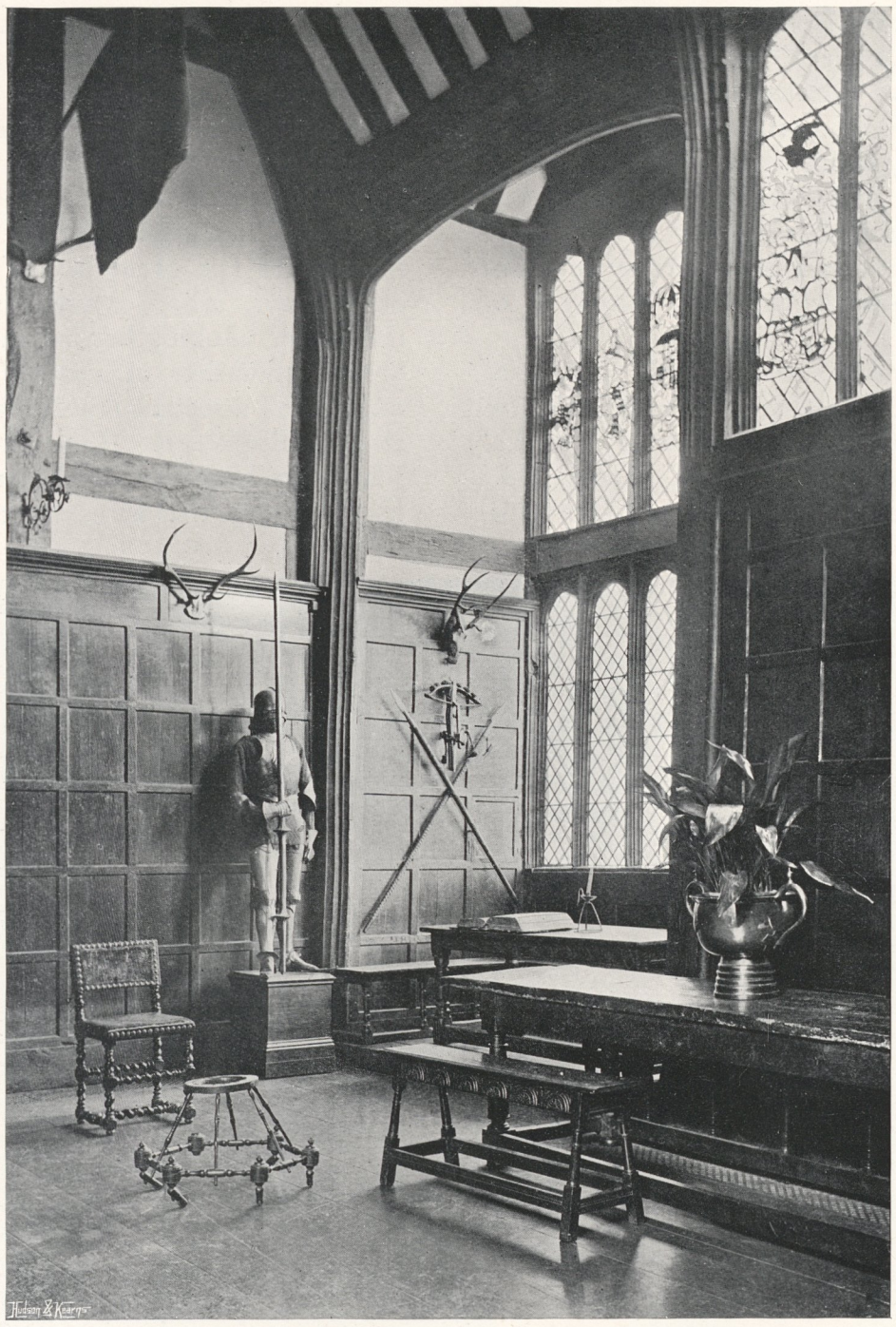
builder of Ockwells Manor House. He also bore the favourite name of John, and was a very important man in his time, standing high in the favour of the Court, and having the ability to steer his ship adroitly amid the shoals and in the strong and troubled currents of the Wars of the Roses. He was First Usher to the Chamber in the reign of Henry VI., Squire of the Body to the King, Master of the Royal Wardrobe, Sheriff of Oxfordshire and Berkshire in 1442 and 1457, and Squire of the Body to Edward IV., being afterwards knighted.

So important a man must needs have an important house, well fitted to receive his guests, and so it came that Ockwells was built. Few people realise what it was to raise in those days so glorious a house. There was something in the operation analogous to the building of a ship—the same need for seasoned oak, the same labour with saw and adze, the same pegging of joint and tenon, and so the structure rose complete and solid. There was superadded the fine craft of the carver, the loving labour of the man who fashioned the cusped window-frames, the magnificent barge-boards and the finials. Then came the glass-stainer with his splendid blazonry, to flood the rooms with colour, and the tapestry, often from distant looms, and the ladies in their bower working at fair embroideries for the adornment of the abode.



THE RECESS.

Mr. Parker of Oxford, that eminent authority on English mediæval architecture, who described Ockwells about half a century ago, found the place then decayed from its former state, dilapidated and reduced to the condition of a farmhouse—now most happily regenerated—but he recognised its superb architectural character, and illustrated the magnificent detail of the admirable barge-boards and the remarkable Perpendicular panelling of the timber gables, describing its nearly perfect state as a house of the time of Edward IV., with its grand Hall, open roofed, its splendid painted glass, and its antique air, and the quaint buildings surrounding the small courtyard, the Hall being on one side, with a double wooden cloister, one range over the other. We give an illustration of the exterior of the house to show how rich and beautiful is the work, and it will be noticed that the character is purely Perpendicular, with a low-arched doorway leading to the lobby, which, in the ancient manner, separates the Hall on the one hand from the domestic offices on the other. The beautiful oriel windows, with their narrow cusped lights, and the remarkable elaboration of the gables will be noticed, as also the quaint side of the Hall, with the gabled bay which lights the upper end, where the high table was upon the dais.

Ockwells, as figured in Nash's "Mansions of England in the Olden Time," has a charm of simple antiquity which invests it to-day. Still it has its old quadrangle, with passages around three sides of it, still the splendid Hall, the quaint buttery hatch, and all the architectural features which then distinguished it, recovered from some state of decay, and as fair as ever it was in its early prime. It is not the purpose here to recount family history, but a little more shall be said of the Berkshire house of Norreys. The builder of Ockwells Manor House was twice married, his first wife being Alice Merebrooke, who brought as her dowry or heritage the manor of Yattendon in the same county; and his second wife