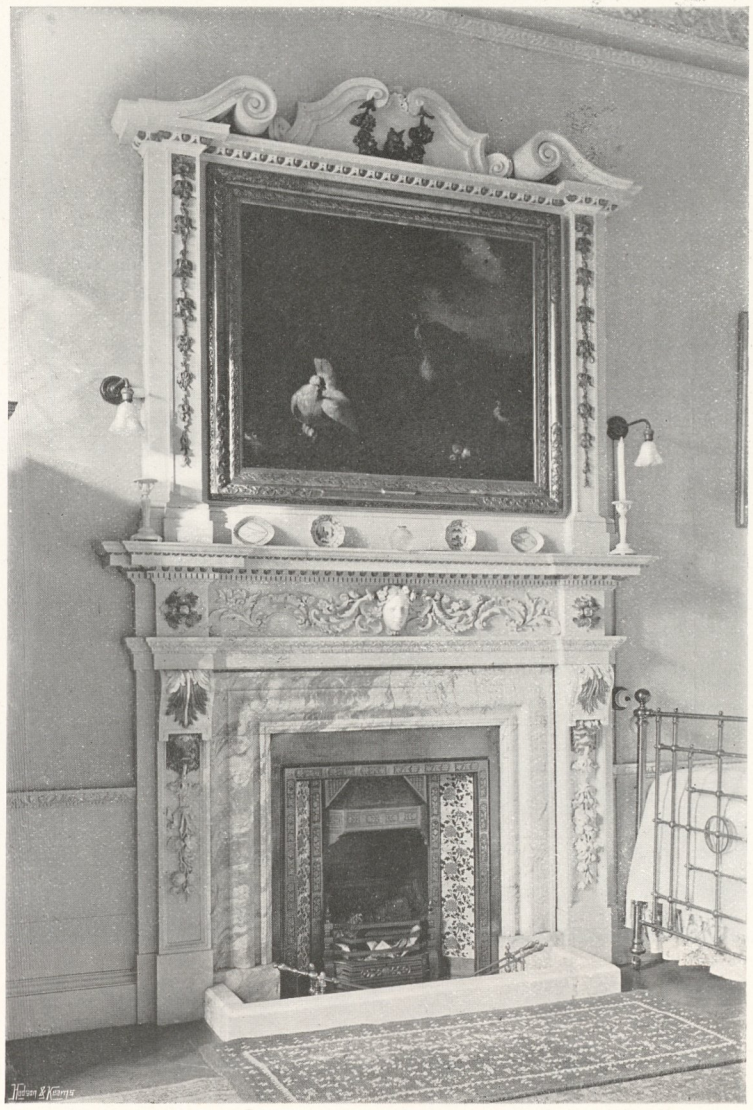
columns, which flank the portrait in the centre. Scarcely less beautiful is another chimney-piece in a Dressing Room of the Redlynch suite, which is also of white marble, but it is of a less stately and more homelike character. It enframes a large picture of doves in a landscape, and the decoration is perhaps somewhat more conventional, and has a richer and less severely classical effect.

The Dining Room, like all the rooms at Melbury, has a character of its own. Here, again, we find exquisite carving of the Grinling Gibbons school over the two fireplaces, enshrining two family portraits. In these carvings the master hand has introduced in the one case trophies of musical instruments, and in the other of dead game and fish. The walls are hung with very old cream-coloured silk, and the ceiling is richly recessed in geometrical patterns. The pictures on the walls are for the most part family portraits.

Perhaps the most remarkable room in Melbury is the Boudoir. It might seem impossible for a room of any size to get lost even in a great house, yet it is the fact that the Boudoir was completely hidden away, and not discovered until quite recent times. It is assigned by antiquaries to about the year 1590. The chimney-piece and the ceiling are richly decorated in the style of the English Renaissance The ceiling, recessed in geometrical patterns, bears many floreated bosses and heraldic animals, while running all round the walls, which are hung with cream-tinted silk, is a floreated band carrying numerous coats of arms associated with the family and its intermarriages. Altogether, the decoration gives an effect of peculiar richness, which is enhanced by the admirable pictures on the walls. In the Billiard Room is a fine bay window with some ancient heraldic glass, which has survived the vicissitudes of centuries, and here are old tapestry and fine furniture much to be admired.

The Library is the only room in the house of modern date, it having been added from the designs of Mr. Salvin, and it is the last room in Lord Ilchester's beautiful abode to be spoken of here. It has a fine open-timbered roof, with dependent bosses and stone brackets bearing coats of arms. Here, as in many another room at Melbury, may be seen swans of the loveliest plumage, stuffed and mounted as screens. These come from Abbotsbury Castle, where is, probably, the largest swannery in the kingdom. The pictures on the walls are few, and consist of family portraits by great masters. There are several good Canalettos and a Rembrandt. In some ways more interesting even than these is an admirably spirited portrait of Molly Lepel, the first Lady Hervey, standing in the quaint and characteristic dress of the period, with a little dog by her side—an excellent example of the work of Hogarth.



A MARBLE CHIMNEY-PIECE.