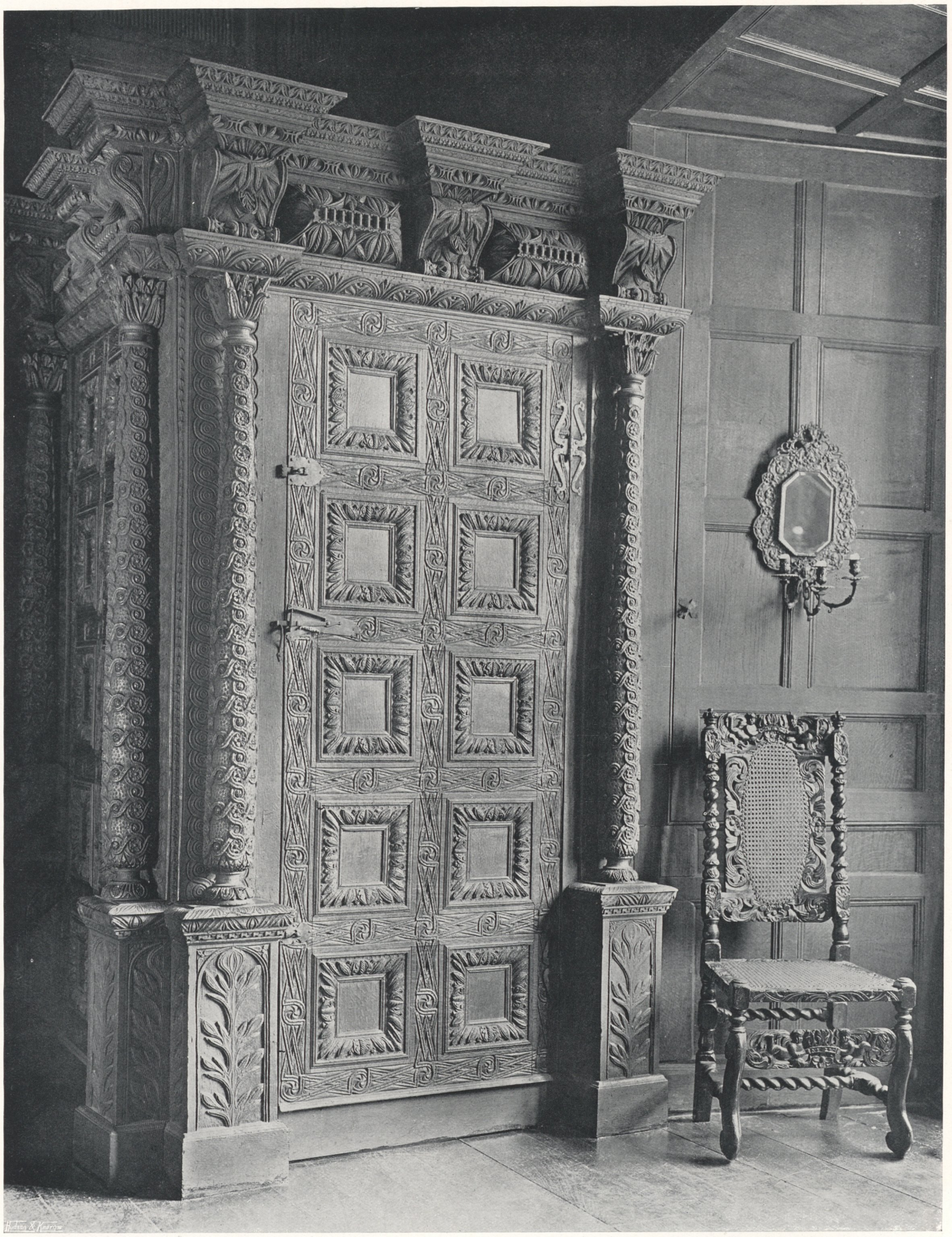
MAXSTOKE CASTLE,

WARWICKSHIRE.

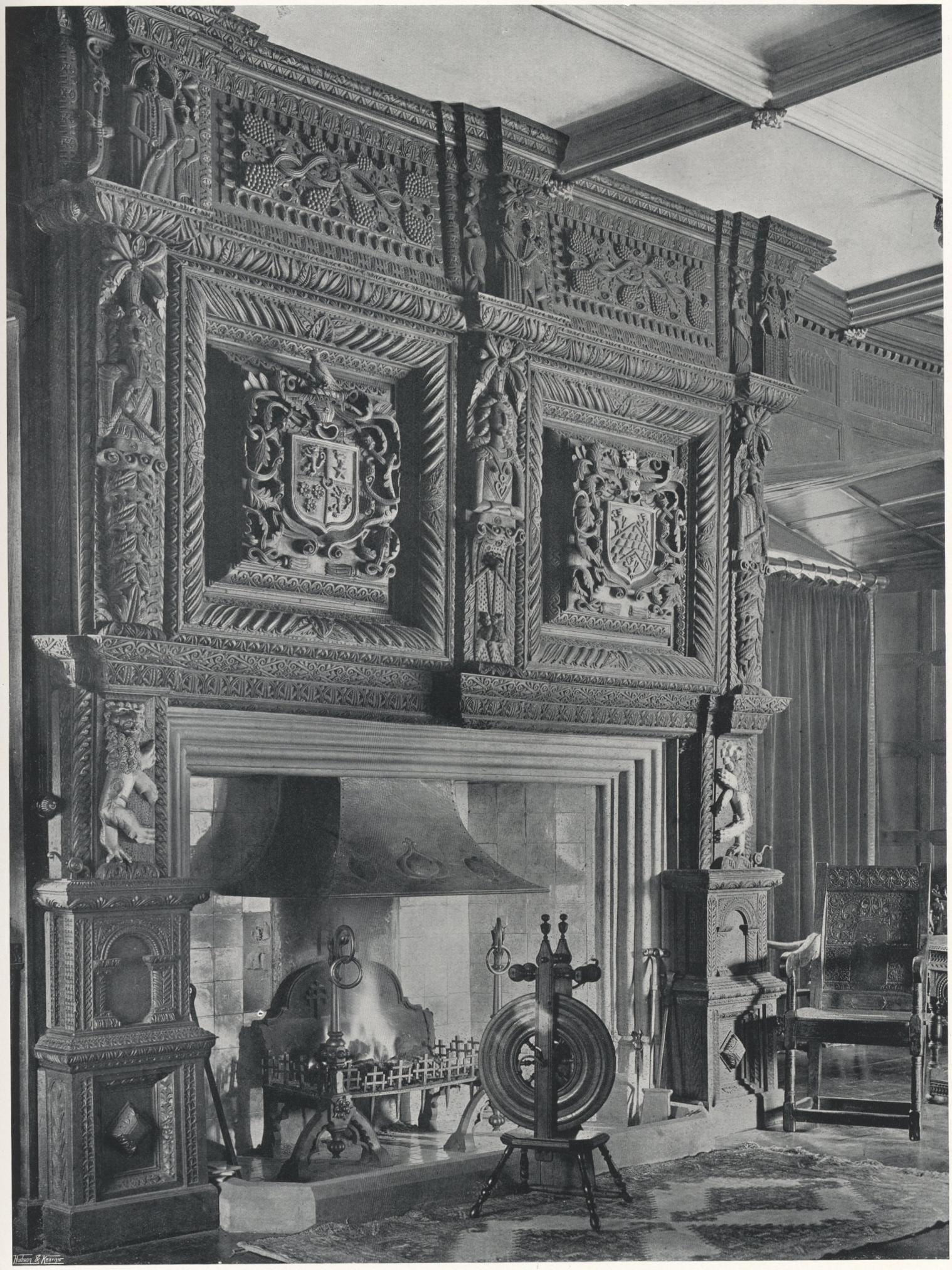
THE Castle of Maxstoke, lying in one of the most beautiful parts of Warwickshire, retains, to an exceptional degree, its Gothic structure, though the interior was largely altered and redecorated to suit the changed circumstances of seventeenth century existence. Here, in early Plantagenet times, lived the Oddingsells, of whom the last died under Edward I., and his eldest sister carried Maxstoke to her husband, John de Clinton. Their second son inherited this estate, and was the builder of the castle largely as it yet survives. This



ACROSS THE MOAT--THE ONLY ENTRANCE.



INTERIOR PORCH IN THE DRAWING-ROOM.



THE DRAWING-ROOM CHIMNEY-PIECE.

William de Clinton was Warden of the Cinque Ports and Custodian of the King's Forests south of Trent. He was raised to the Earldom of Huntingdon in 1337, and soon after, having obtained the necessary licence to crenellate, he commenced operations at Maxstoke. Dying in 1354, he left it to his elder brother's son John, third Baron Clinton, who fought at Poictiers and was Constable of Windsor. Before the next century was far advanced his descendant, the fifth Lord Clinton, exchanged Maxstoke with Humphrey Stafford Duke of Buckingham for lands in Northamptonshire. For three generations Maxstoke continued one of the many possessions of this great family, whose ill-directed ambitions and dangerous cousinship to the throne brought violent death upon them. Humphrey was killed in 1455 at the battle of St. Albans. His son Henry is the Buckingham who looms so large in the first act of Shakespeare's "Richard III." as plotting to get that Prince the Crown. This done, he turned against him, failed in his insurrection and was beheaded in 1483. Restored in blood and honours by Henry VII., his son Edward was the wealthiest and most splendid of the nobles of his age; but in 1521 he was tried and executed by "the long divorce of steel," for high treason, really because he stood too near to the Royal line for the liking of Henry VIII., and because he had incautiously said that under certain conditions he might succeed to the throne as representing Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, youngest son of Edward III.

Maxstoke was forfeited by the attainder of the Duke, and, after passing through the hands of the family of Compton, it was purchased in 1599 from Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, by Mr. Thomas Dilke, with whose descendants it has ever since remained, being now the property of Mr. Beaumont Fetherston. The Fetherstons came by direct descent, and Dugdale recalls that Mr. Francis Fetherston "was slayne by a trooper at Kensington, September 2nd, 1682," and his buff coat has been preserved among the old treasures of Maxstoke. The venerable structure is built upon the plan of a parallelogram, and the moat in which its ancient walls and towers are reflected is some 16ft. deep and very wide, the water being supplied by a stream, and collected in two pools on the south-west, which are curiously known as the Top Pool and the Pool Tail. The angle towers are very strong, and afforded to the defenders a great command over their assailants, opening upon the embattled walls. These walls are 26ft. high, and the gateway tower, as our illustration shows, is formidable, being flanked by two hexagonal towers, projecting and loop-holed for the defence of the drawbridge. It may be noticed that the stonework in our picture of the vaulted entrance archway is so constructed that the bridge could be raised, and that its upper edge, fitting close under the stone ledge, would make it impossible for the besiegers to grapple it from outside. The groove for the portcullis is plainly visible, as are openings in the entrance archway through which molten lead, pitch, or other destructive elements of old warfare could be poured upon those who won their way thus far. Behind the portcullis the heavy oaken doors were closed, and still remain, the hinges bearing the cross crosslets which were the arms of William de Clinton, the founder, and the ancient oak still has the iron plating which was added by the Duke of Buckingham, with his coat armour and badge. The entrance archway is groined with massive ribs, springing directly from the walls, and ornamented with carved bosses at the intersections.

The dwelling-house occupies the north-west angle of the courtyard. Some part of it is early, but the front was rebuilt in the seventeenth century, and some changes have since been introduced. The great baronial hall, with a dais at one end, is on the first floor, and is a handsome apartment, possessing some valuable pictures. At the south end of the hall was the chapel, now disused, which has a very fine west window of the Late Decorated period. Here, in 1457, John Talbot, afterwards Earl of Shrewsbury, married Catherine, daughter of the Duke of Buckingham. The kitchen was on the other side of the chapel, and had oak panelling and an original fireplace. It would appear that communication must have been carried on between the hall and the kitchen across the chapel, whose lower part now serves as a pantry, while the upper part forms a corridor of communication with the great hall. The latter apartment is very handsome, with a notable mantel-piece on the west side of carved and coloured stone, adorned with the many quarterings of the Dilkes, and bearing curious inscriptions—"Pennatus sidera morte," "Where no woode is ye fire goeth out," "No tale bearers, strife ceaseth."

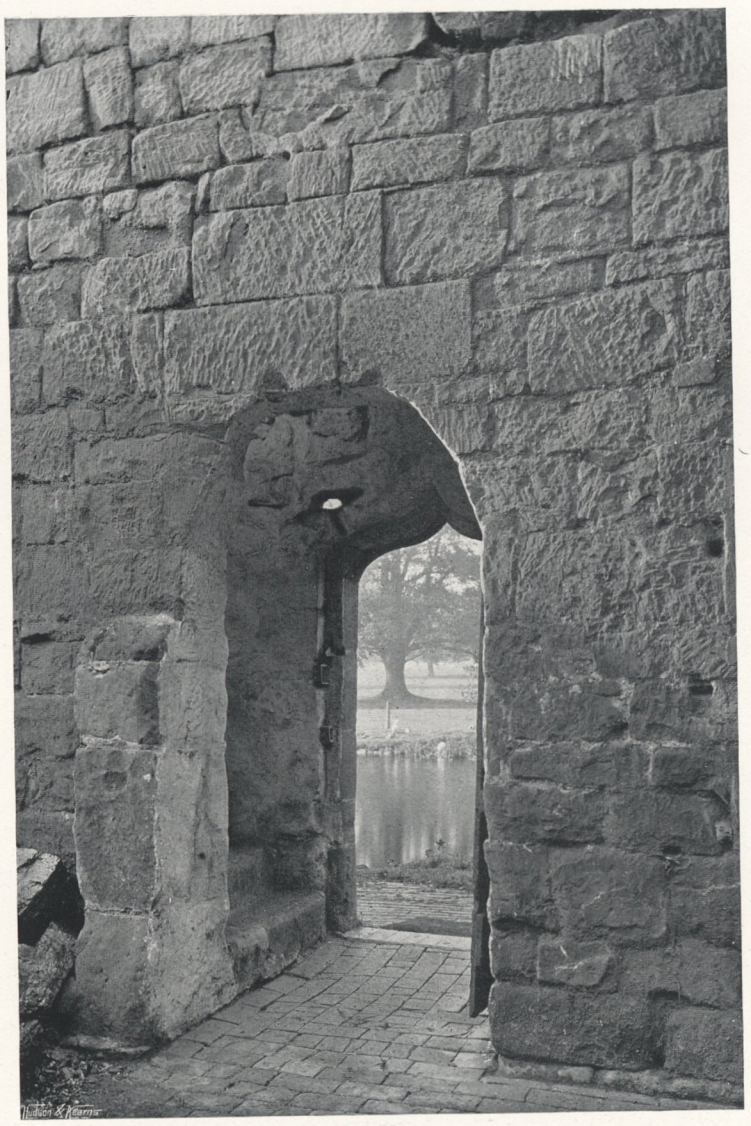
The oak drawing-room is another room whose woodwork shows that the first Dilke owners adapted and adorned the ancient castle they had bought in full and rich accord with the taste of their day. It is finely panelled throughout, and is distinguished by the possession of a grand carved doorway such as Sizergh had and Broughton still retains, forming an inner porch, which is most curiously and richly carved in an unusual manner, with doors very deeply panelled, as will be seen in one of the pictures. The mantel-piece is also remarkably interesting. It is most richly and boldly carved in three stages, the upper part being supported by three caryatides, and the intervening panels being very characteristically sculptured with the shield of Dilke quartering Ashton, and the arms and crest of Sir Clement Fisher of Pakington with rich mantlings. In the uppermost compartments is a vine pattern in the panels with figures between. An unusual feature will be noticed in the very quaint rampant lions which are upon the plinths below, and which are evidently in sympathy



ANCIENT VAULTING AND WOOD GATES.

with those on the shields above, although these last are not regardant. Here are portraits of Colonel Dilke and his wife, of the time of William and Mary, and of the Duke of Schomberg, as well as the likeness of Tom Grainger, who was the last jester of Maxstoke, 1681, represented with an owl perched on his shoulder, a pipe in his hand and a grin playing upon his face. Here also is an antique oak chair, said to have been brought from an old house on Bosworth Field, which bears an inscription on a brass plate : "In this chair King Henry VII. was crowned on Bosworth Field, A.D. 1485." The table of the dining-room on the ground floor is said to have been made out of a tree in Coleshill Park, at which Oliver Cromwell is believed to have practised marksmanship.

Enough has been said to show how singularly interesting, both historically and architecturally, is Maxstoke Castle. Much else would deserve to be noticed in the place. There is in the "Lady's Tower" a drawing-room, in the windows of which it is seen that the walls are 5ft. thick. It is a panelled chamber with a good mantelpiece, and above it is a bedroom, termed Henry VII.'s, and above this still another bedroom, which commands a fine view over the park. Below, the basements are vaulted, and there are several old oaken chimney-pieces ; but in every part of Maxstoke there is something to attract and interest. It combines a precious example of mediæval building and mediæval modes of life, with much good work of a period when easier and more comfortable habits began to obtain, and when peace and wealth were permitting the general adornment and beautifying of the principal apartments of the rich commoner's home. It is at present the residence of Mr. H. Lincoln Tangye.



STEPS TO BATTLEMENTS.