BURTON CONSTABLE,

YORKSHIRE.

SOME nine miles from the port of Kingston-on-Hull is the great house of Burton Constable, an East Riding seat which has never changed owners by bargain and sale since the riders of William the Norman wasted the North. It is in the wild lowlands of Holderness, the sea within five miles of its eastern porch, and at the beginning of the twelfth century it had the name of Erenburgh Burton, for it was then the land of the noble dame Erenburgh or Erenburge of Burton, whose name tells us that she was not of English blood. She was twice wedded, her first husband being Gilbert of Alost from Flanders, and her second mate Ulbert the Constable. From Ulbert and Erenburge the twentieth century lord of Burton can trace his succession. Burton is in the bounds of Swine parish, and a gift by Erenburge of Burton, wife of Ulbert, of a ploughgang of her lands to Swine Priory is the earliest of the Constable documents, and when the prioress of Swine exchanged Erenburge's gift for other land of the Prior of Bridlington, Robert, the son of Erenburge, whose chief seat was at Halsham, confirmed the bargain. So the Constables were settled at Burton and Halsham, and Constable succeeded Constable therein in spite of warrings and wanderings. For far afield some of them went, a Robert Constable of Burton mortgaging to a house of monks his Halsham lands to find means to go with his following to Holy Land, where he laid his bones at Acre. They were a knightly race, these Constables, and the King's summons to join him in his wars came often to Burton. When Sir Marmaduke Constable of Flamborough led the left wing of the English



SOUTH TOWER SIDE.



PART OF THE EAST FRONT.



THE WEST FACADE.

host at Flodden, he had about him his three "seemly sons."

In the seventeenth century the Constables of Burton were raised to the peerage in the person of Sir Henry Constable, the head of the house. He was son of Henry Constable of Halsham, sheriff of the county under Queen Mary, by Margaret Dormer from Buckinghamshire, so obstinate a recusant papist that she was "not to be reformed by any persuasion nor yet by coercion." King James knighted Henry Constable the younger at the Tower of London in 1614, and six years later made him a peer of Scotland, as Lord Constable and Viscount Dunbar. inherited Burton Constable with the condition of taking the name and arms of the Constables. Besides being of near kin to the old Constables, this squire of Burton was born in their faith. Douay had given him an education among the exiled children of the English Roman Catholics, and Montpellier the degree of Doctor of Medicine. He brought a scholar's taste to Burton, where he built and planted, collected manuscripts, corresponded with Hearne the Oxford antiquary, formed a library and made a name for himself as the "Catholic Mæcenas of his age." He died at Burton in the spring of 1746, while the Duke of Cumberland was marching North to crush that



DINING HALL.

A recusant like his mother, and, indeed, like most of his kinsfolk, it was found in 1629 that the Viscount Dunbar did not frequent his parish church. But he had some courtly quality that kept him in Court favour, and the King gave him a Royal letter which guaranteed him immunity from prying conformists. That he was a man of open hand with a fine wastefulness we know, for his contemporaries note him as a gambler who once lost £3,000 in gold at a single sitting. The peerage gave a title to but three generations of Constables, the last Constable of Burton and last Viscount Dunbar dying in 1718, when his sister's son, a Tunstall of Wycliffe Hall, rebellion for whose success so many people of Squire Constable's persuasion were secretly praying. Sons have been few to the later owners of Burton, and to Tunstalls succeeded Sheldons of Scargill, to Sheldons Cliffords, and to Cliffords Chichesters.

The ancient mansion boasts that in the north front among its stones are the walls of a house of King Stephen's time, called Stephen's Tower, but, for the most part, it is Tudor and Jacobean brickwork, sadly defaced by restoration and counter-restoration. Towards the west and the east it shows long lines of roof and windows. The eastern front has the main entry, the centre crowned with a pediment which shelters the arms



THE LONG GALLERY.

and supporters of the Constables. Turrets with cupolas jut at the ends, beyond which have been built out wings which make three sides of a quadrangle. The west front also is pointed with transoms, restored to them by William Constable, who succeeded his father in 1746, before whose time the old house-windows had been cut away to make room for disfiguring classicisms. To



THE GALLERY HALL.

a pediment, above which the skyline is broken by a huddled trophy of banners, eagles, pikes, halberds and laurels surrounding the barred shield of Constable. The windows here, as on the other side of the house, have stone mullions and the south and north, where are the offices, antiquity has been less vexed by improving hands, and the use of differing building materials gives us some clue to the gradual growth of the house.

In "Stephen's tower" were collected the once famous collections of the Burton manuscript, among which old George Poulson, the historian of Holderness, wrought upon his book. Going round the wide bounds of the outer walls it is hard to assign dates to each wall and bay; but it is clear that Cuthbert Tunstall, when he succeeded to Burton in 1718, must have made changes at a time when the ancient house was probably in ill repair. He has left his mark for us clearly enough in the pierced work of the parapets above the bayed windows, which is formed of the C.C. of his initials. The arms over the east front show somewhat earlier changes, as they have the coronet of the Dunbars. Within doors the polite taste of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has done havoc upon the rooms of an old English house, for Car of York was much at work here. Doric pillars and pilasters, sham Tudor details, rococo mirrors, classical busts and statues, Chinese cornices and Wedgwood vases put out of countenance the ancestral faces of Constables, Tunstalls and Cliffords which look down from scores of frames. The room which in Poulson's days was the entry hall is now furnished as a dining-room, a double cube 60ft. by 30ft., something of the height being disguised by the vaulted cornice, the dwarf pilasters resting on brackets dividing the architrave into sixteen compartments, through five of which another part of the house is lighted. Over the Doric columns of the mantel-piece is a shield of arms with the many quarterings of the Constables, the bearings inlaid in coloured mosaic, surrounded by carven boughs and swags, an oak panel under the mantel-shelf having the Bacchic panther. Portraits of Charles II. and James II. hang beside the fireplace, and beyond them in niches stand a marble Hercules leading Cerberus and a marble Demosthenes. Old portraits of Constable knights are here, with three of the Viscounts Dunbar and William Constable painted as Cato, his sister Winifred standing as Marcia. The little banners of arms hung upon the cornices recall a shrievalty of one of the lords of Burton. Another of our pictures shows the long gallery, a vast room to which the grand staircase leads. The really beautiful relief of the cornice, with its vines, mermaids and sea monsters, is imitated from the Bodley buildings at Oxford, and the garlands and pendants of the ceiling are an attempt at restoration of early work from a drawing. This is now by far the most beautiful and pleasant room of a house which must once have ranked with Blickling and Holland House.



THE EAST FACADE.