LYME,

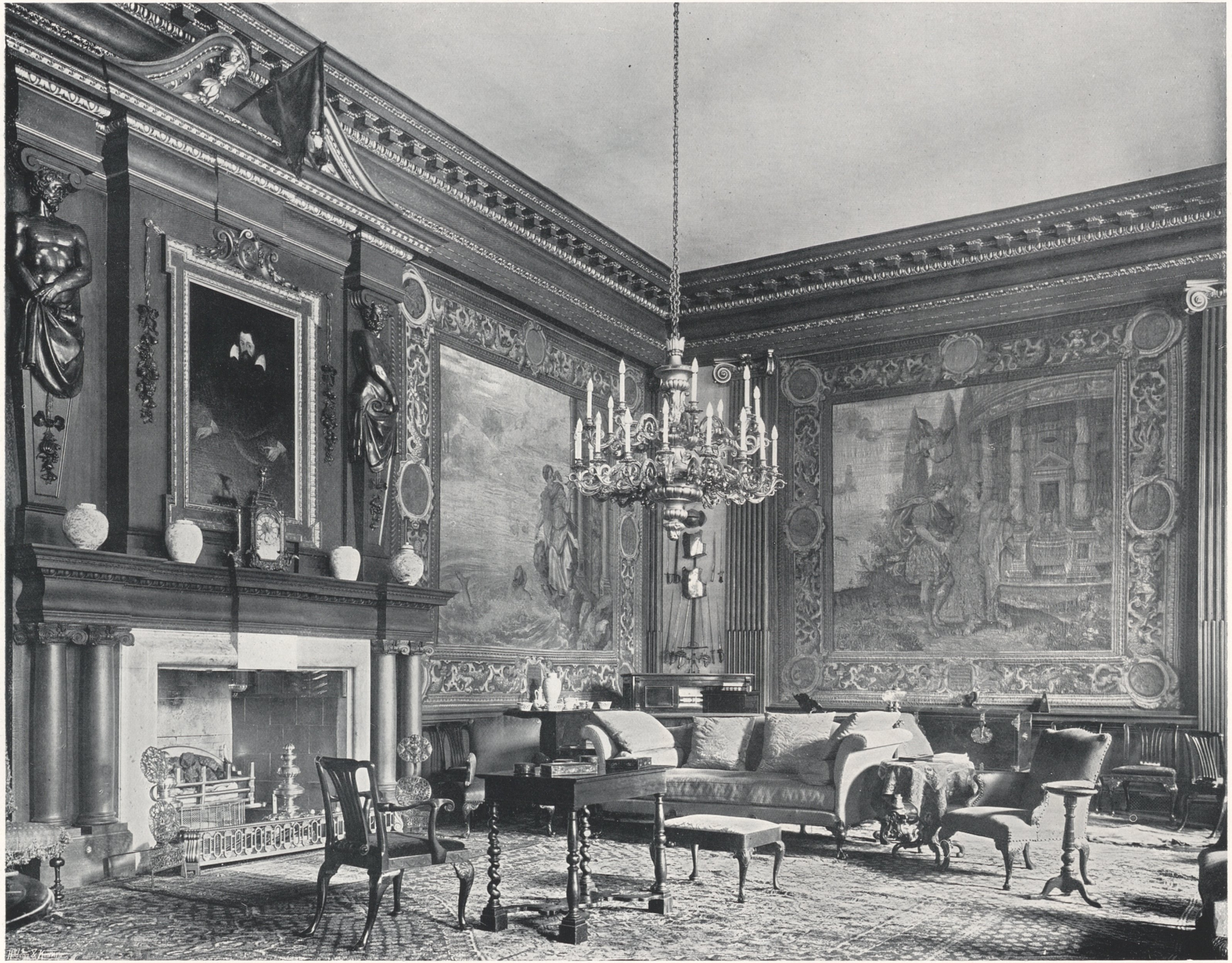
CHESHIRE.

THOSE who know well the great and interesting historic sites of Cheshire, rich as that county is in fine stone and timber domestic architecture, are agreed that in extent, associations, dignity of form, richness of surroundings and all that goes to make a great and attractive seat, Lyme excels its compeers, and is a place which should be visited at the cost of time and trouble by those who pass that way. What it may lack in the picturesqueness associated with the architecture of the shire is more than compensated by the splendour and grandeur of its character.

The most remarkable point in the history of the place is its relation to the battle of Crecy. Like Adlington, the home of the senior branch of the Leghs, the Lyme estate lies in the old Macclesfield Forest district, and it was definitely granted by Richard II., in 1398, to Piers de Legh, afterwards called Perkyn à Legh, or Lee, and his wife Margaret, daughter and heiress of Sir Thomas Danyers, Knight, then deceased. The letters patent, which may be seen in the Cheshire Recognisance Rolls, set an old controversy at rest. It has been stated repeatedly that the grant was made to Perkyn à Legh in reward for his distinguished services at Crecy, and the armour which he is said to have worn on that historic field has been shown at Lyme Hall. It is now known that the grantee was not born until seventeen years after the battle, and that the distinguished service



TO THE HALL COURTYARD.



THE FRONT HALL.



THE DINING-ROOM.

was rendered by his father-in-law, Sir Thomas Danyers, who was instrumental in capturing the Chamberlain de Tankerville, and was one of those who courageously rescued, or relieved, the standard of the Black Prince. For this service Danyers was to receive 40 marks per annum out of the rents of the Cheshire manor of Frodsham until such time as the King could make him a grant of £20 in land, but he died before this could be done; wherefore, by the Royal grace, and in recognition of Danyers's services, "one piece of land and pasture called Hanley" (afterwards Lyme Handley) was granted to his daughter Margaret and her husband Piers de Legh. Old Flower the herald, who should have been the fount of accuracy in such matters, was mainly responsible for confusing Sir Thomas Danyers with his son-in-law, through granting in Elizabeth's reign in rather ambiguous words an honourable augmentation to the arms of the Sir Piers Legh of the time, seemingly ascribing the deeds of Danyers to the husband of that gallant soldier's daughter. The first Legh of Lyme was a supporter of Richard II., who granted the place to him, but he paid the penalty when Richard was deposed, being captured at Chester, where he was beheaded on August 10th, 1399. We shall pass rapidly over the subsequent history of the distinguished line. Sir Piers de Legh, son of the grantee, was one of the heroes of Agincourt. He died at Paris in 1422, his body being brought to Macclesfield for burial, and there in the church may be seen an inscription commemorating both father and son :

> Here lyeth the bodie of Perkyn a Legh
> That for King Richard the death did die,
> Betrayed for righteusnes;
> And the bones of Sir Peers his sonne
> That with King Henry the fift did wonne
> In Paris.

Still another Sir Piers, who was a very prominent and active man in his day, proved himself a valiant soldier in troublous times, and was knighted at the battle of Wakefield, December 31st, 1460. Five years later he drew up a very careful account of his estates in Lancashire and Cheshire, which forms a folio of 303 pages of vellum, finely written and still preserved at Lyme, as also is a description of the house in which he dwelt, doubtless like Adlington, one of the quadrangular timber buildings of the shire. His grandson, also Sir Piers de Legh, was knighted at Hutton Field, near Berwick, in 1482, and was seneschal of Blackburnshire—a very important office. After the death of his wife, the daughter of Sir John Savage of Clifton, he entered holy orders, and in Winwick Church is a brass showing him in armour, but tonsured,



SOUTH GALLERY



THE STAG PARLOUR.

and with a priest's vestments over his coat of mail. He was always described in later life as "knight and priest," and his will directs that he shall be buried at Winwick in such manner



CORNER OF THE DRAWING-ROOM.

that "the prest shall alwaies at the tyme of consecrason stand ever over and upon my harte." His grandson Sir Peter Legh, knighted at Leith in 1544, and sheriff respectively of Lancashire and Cheshire in 1551 and 1554, married the daughter of Sir Thomas Gerard of Bryn when she was a child; but she lived to the age of eighty or more, and a portrait of her, in her latest years, is to be seen at Lyme, where she is depicted holding a great-grandchild in her arms. Her husband placed a series of heraldic shields in the church at Disley, giving the arms of



THE DRAWING-ROOM.

Knights of the Garter in Elizabeth's reign, and these, having been removed from the church, are now one of the ornaments of the oriel window in the drawing-room at Lyme. The house has several portraits of this Sir Peter, who, with his grandson who succeeded him, must have been responsible for the rebuilding of Lyme, as many of the fine rooms which we illustrate, with their exceptional stone, wood and plaster work, are of the date of these two owners.

The grandson, another Sir Peter, was knighted at Greenwich in 1598, and died in 1635. There are portraits of both his wives at Lyme, that of his second wife, daughter of Sir Richard Egerton, being one of the gems of the collection. Nearly every subsequent owner of Lyme



PART OF THE SALOON.



IN THE STONE PARLOUR.

has taken some prominent part in local or national affairs, and Mr. William John Legh, who fought in the Crimea as a captain of the 21st Fusiliers, was raised to the peerage as Baron Newton of Newton-in-Makerfield in 1892, and was succeeded by his son, the present peer, in 1898.

There is no mention of the structure of Lyme Hall prior to 1466, when it is described as being a fair hall, with a high chamber, kitchen and other offices. Probably not much of this structure remains, for the house has been reconstructed and enlarged by various subsequent owners. One of our pictures is of the Stag Parlour, dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century, of which, in the very characteristic style of its mantel, it is an excellent illustration. It will be noticed that in the second range of panelling are the Royal arms of James I. between figures of Peace and Plenty, and above them a representation of the house, and of a stag "drive." The house is thus represented—and the representation is very unusual—as being of the customary Elizabethan or Jacobean type, with mullioned windows, a projecting porch and

advancing gabled ends, the central block being surmounted by a lantern and dome. The Stag Parlour evidently has relation to the chase of the deer, which was the principal sport of the dwellers in and near the forest of Macclesfield with the Royal consent, for below the cornice are twelve panels representing a stag-hunt. The apartment seems also more particularly to record



THE WESTERN CORRIDOR.

the singular custom of driving the deer, which was a practice at Lyme Hall, the animals being collected once a year and driven through some water near the mansion. Mr. Joseph Watson, the park keeper, who died at the age of 105 in 1753, appears to have carried this practice to perfection. "He drove and shewed the red deer to most of the nobility and gentry in that part of the kingdom to the surprise and satisfaction of them and of all others that saw that performance, as he could command them at his pleasure the same as if they had been common horned cattle." This little *excursus* into a singular feature of the annals of Lyme will be forgiven, because it serves to explain the significance of the beautiful Stag Parlour. A great change passed over the house in and about the year 1726, when Giacomo Leoni, a well-known Italian architect, who did much work in England at the time, reconstructed and partially cased the then existing structure, giving it a massive and dignified quadrangular classic form. The central lantern was taken down and re-erected in a wood about a mile from the house. The north front was partially cased, and the south front given an Ionic portico, with statues of Neptune and of Venus and Pan on either side. The north front is the principal entrance, and is approached through an enclosed court. Its great three-storeyed porch, whose entrance archway we illustrate, was only slightly tampered with by Leoni, who topped it with a statue of Minerva, and put in sash windows. It much resembles that which is carved on the Stag Parlour mantel-piece, and it is the one important exterior feature retained from the age of Elizabeth. As regards its exterior, Lyme must now be classed with such Palladian palaces as Badminton, Chatsworth and Stoneleigh, but so much of its older aspect remains within that we have placed it in this volume with Holland House, Quenby and Blickling.

On entering the quadrangle a flight of steps is seen on the east side, leading up to the great hall, and on this side also are the dining-room, ante-room and the Stag Parlour, which has been alluded to. At the north-east angle is the chapel, with the drawing-room over it, other principal apartments being the saloon, library and the long gallery, which is approached by a fine staircase. There is good classic work on the south side, and we show the fine work of the staircase and gallery, which have simple and



IN THE LONG GALLERY

ordered dignity, with characteristic balusters, Corinthian columns and a fine plaster ceiling. The hall is a very handsome room ; its mantel-piece, carved ceiling, cornice, and pilastered and tapestried walls place it among the work which was done at Lyme just before or soon after the Restoration, fifty years antecedent to Leoni.

The great drawing-room, as will be seen, is a superb apartment, and has scarcely been altered, except in its windows, since Elizabeth's reign. It has a magnificent mantel-piece resting upon coupled Ionic columns, while above, splendidly and richly carved, are the Royal arms of Elizabeth, flanked by caryatides which support the enriched pediment. The oak panelling is divided into three tiers, of which the central is composed of an interlaced arcading elaborately wrought, and a band of inlaid work runs above it. Though comparable to that at Langleys and Quenby, it is quite distinct and more elaborate. The space in this lofty room between the panelling and the ceiling cornice is occupied by a very rich raised plaster frieze of strapwork and garlands enclosing medallions with masks and other devices. On the upper tier of panelling hang portraits, mainly of the seventeenth century members of the family, and of the same date are a fine settee and other good pieces of furniture.

As we have already hinted, Leoni did more to the outside than to the inside of the house, and the drawing-room is by no means the only room where the spirit of the age of Elizabeth and her successor continues to prevail. The long gallery has likewise a chimney-piece blazoned with her arms, and the Knight's Room and Stone Parlour show mantels most interesting as being so nearly a pair and yet so dissimilar both in their heraldry and their ornament. We group Lyme in the Jacobean section, yet it is almost a museum of the evolution of the decorative arts. When we have finished with the early years of the seventeenth century we have an example of its middle period in the front hall, with its essentially Inigo Jones treatment, and of its close in the dining-room, which breathes the style of Wren. The saloon takes us to the beginning of the eighteenth century, for it must be essentially Leoni's, the ceiling showing that the *style Louis XV.* had reached England. The wood-carvings have a thinness and detachment which is most elegant, but differs from the teeming fulness of Grinling Gibbons's usual manner, although they are authenticated as his work ; and objects of interest may be sought also in other parts of the house, including the library, and the collection of antiques and casts in the western corridor. But enough has been said to show that Lord Newton's ancient dwelling-place has been most appropriately styled "the lordly house of Lyme."



THE KNIGHT'S OR GHOST'S ROOM.