HOLLAND HOUSE,

KENSINGTON.

A GREAT part of the English race has perforce to dwell under the chimney-pots of our cities. Yet Englishmen love before all things the green grass and the shade of the bough, and of all London houses those are most to be envied from whose windows the sight of a few trees or a stunted lawn brings the open country to mind. When the map of London is spread the green spaces of the parks catch the eye at once, the dearest possessions of the London people. Here is the great oblong of Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, here is the triangle of the Green Park, and here St. James's Park, the broad border of a pond. One of the least of these green places marks the gardens of the Royal Palace, and it is with something of surprise that the stranger sees by the map that one subject lives in London more magnificently harboured than the King himself.

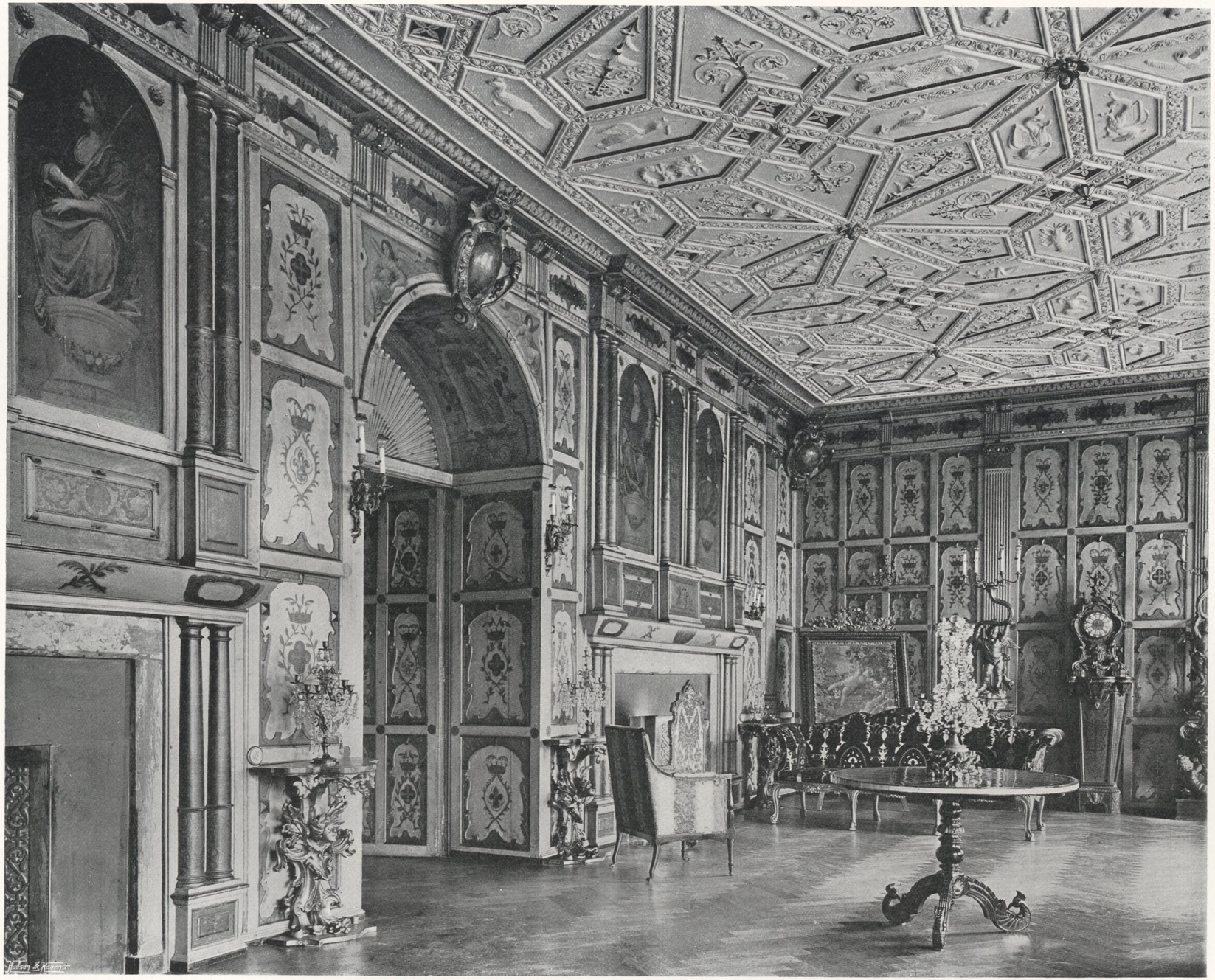


THE STAIR ASCENT.

The omnibuses which carry us past Kensington High Street towards the Hammersmith Road pass the walls of a park, into which Londoners, who have broken into the Royal parks one by one, have not yet gained an entry. The crests upon the gates and lodges are those of a private family, and there, a



ENTRANCE HALL.



THE GILT ROOM.

quarter of a mile away up among the trees, lies the most beautiful of all London houses.

The history of Holland House is not a long one, as the histories of old English homes go. Kensington is of ancient settlement. Aubrey de Vere, as every antiquary knows, held Chenisitun when Domesday Book was made up, and his descendants, the Earls of Oxford, held the manor until Henry VIII.'s time, when it was carried away by the female co-heirs. But Holland House, from its foundations, was begun by Walter Cope, who acquired the manor in 1610. Some years before that time, the ancient manor house not being in his hands, he laid the first stone of the palace which looks over modern Kensington, Cope Castle being its first name.

Sir Walter Cope, knight, master of the court of wards and gentleman of the bed-chamber to James I., built a house, but begat no son to succeed him in it. Isabel, his only child, carried



THE WHITE PARLOUR.



THE GILT ROOM--SOUTH SIDE.

it to her husband, Sir Henry Rich, captain of the yeomen of the guard. The Rich family came from London citizens, and was set up by Richard Rich, the Lord Chancellor. This Richard was he who brought Sir Thomas More and Fisher to the block, and racked Anne Askew. He was a persecutor of friars and reformers under Henry VIII., and of Essex heretics under Mary. He deserted Somerset in his hour of need, proclaimed the Lady Jane Grey, and declared for Mary in the same month. One of the most heartily-hated men in an age when evil passions ran high, his foot never slipped. Henry VIII. made him an executor of his will. Edward VI. created him Lord Rich of Leighs and Lord Chancellor. He sat in Mary's council, and had honourable employments under Elizabeth. Treacherous, time-serving, an unerring backer of the winning side, he died in his bed, and was buried in a fair tomb. This worthy ancestor and house-founder was grandfather to Isabel Cope's husband, the second lord of Holland House. Henry Rich was a second son with his career to make. His beautiful features gave him

his first advancement in the Court of the shambling Solomon, who loved to see handsome faces—Carrs, Villierses and Copes—about him. He was captain of the yeomen of the guard, and after his marriage had given him an estate he was created Lord Kensington. He made love to Henriette Marie as proxy for his prince, and his subserviency to Buckingham made him an earl with that title of Holland, which gives this house its name. When the bad times came on, the Earl of Holland showed that he had all his grandfather's treachery without his ability to steer to safe harbourage. He ratted between King and Parliament, greedy for the main chance, obtaining commands which he could not lead to success, himself walked the open fields of Holland House in order that he might safely shout high affairs of State into the deaf ear of his son-in-law Ireton. But at the last the countess widow was allowed to return, and when the playhouses were shut up there was play-acting in Holland House, fitting obsequies for its dead lord.

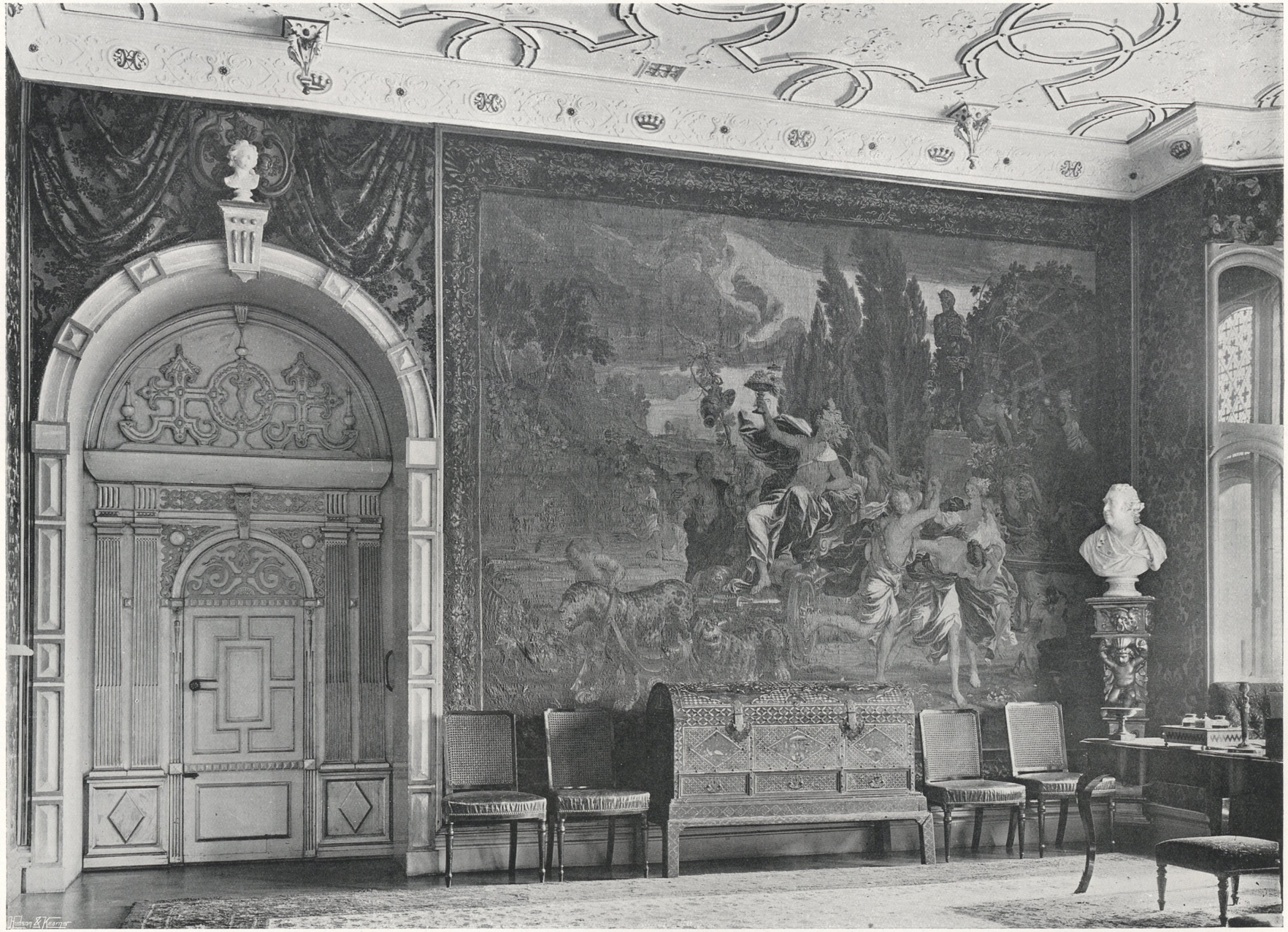
Robert, the second Earl of Holland, son of Henry Rich and Isabel Cope, ruled in his turn at Holland House, which came nigh to changing its name again, for in 1673, by the death of a cousin, the second Earl of Holland became fifth Earl of Warwick. His son Edward married Charlotte Middleton, a lady who, after her lord's death, brought Holland House its first association



WEST END OF SALOON.

and places and monopolies which his hands could not hold safely. The Parliament laid him at last by the heels, and, as one who had helped plunge his country in the second Civil War, he died by the axe in the good company of Duke Hamilton and Lord Capel, dressed out for the spectacle in white satin and silver lace. Of this lord of Holland House Clarendon has the only good word which might be said, that "he was a very well-bred man, and a fine gentleman in good times."

Holland House came to the hands of the Parliament. Fairfax lived here a while, and Lambert had his headquarters here; while a legend of the place tells how the great Protector with literature by taking Joseph Addison for a second husband. He died in 1719 in the great house "which could not contain Mr. Addison, the Countess of Warwick and one guest, Peace." Holland House has more memories of him than of the Earls of Warwick and Holland. Here is the ink-stained table, at which he worked in his Temple days, now standing in the room in which he paced to and fro between bottle and bottle. In the dining-room he died, and the eighteenth century moralists handed from one to the other the tale that he sent in his last moments for the young Earl, that he might "see in what peace a Christian can die." "Unluckily," chuckled Mr. Horace Walpole, as he met the



EAST END OF SALOON. TAPESTRY: THE TRIUMPH OF BACCHUS.

anecdote in its career, "he died of brandy." The Earl who was thus called to his step-father's deathbed, lay on his own two years later, and William Edwardes inherited the Holland estates, which carried him to an Irish peerage as Lord Kensington. Edwardes Square, the daintiest in London, will commemorate his name until the tide of towering flats shall have swept over it. And in his time Holland House was for the first time bought and sold.

The great mansion had harboured many tenants besides its owners and the Roundhead general who sat in their seat. Sir John Chardin, the traveller, a Frenchman by birth and an English knight, lived here. His name is little remembered; but he earned a grave in Westminster Abbey, and his book of travels in Persia and the East Indies is still a classic with those who read the old voyagers. Bishop Atterbury's daughter kept her father's library at Holland House; and the "Downright Skipper," a once-famous Parliament man, whom history has beckoned to a more modest place than he held when living, must be reckoned among the passing tenants of Holland House.

In 1749 Henry Fox, the Secretary for War, had a lease of Holland House at a rent of £182 16s. 9d. The sum will serve as a text for the economist who would discourse on the changing value of money. To-day, a flat of half-a-dozen rooms which can boast of a distant view of the lawns of Holland House, will easily command such a rental. In 1767, the old Holland title having been revived for him in a new barony, the leaseholder bought Holland House, which has ever since descended in his family.

The new lord was a younger son of old Sir Stephen Fox, Charles II.'s Paymaster-General. Sir Stephen had come from a singing boy with a handsome face and a thorough grounding in the art of bookkeeping to be a useful servant to the King in exile in the Low Countries, and one of that King's richest subjects after His Majesty's restoration. In his seventy-seventh year the old knight "being of a vegete and hale constitution" took a second wife, and begat two sons to inherit his great estate. He was born in 1627, and had been employed during the Civil War in England. His son Henry lived to see a soldier son leave England for the campaign against the revolting colonists of America, dying at Holland House in 1774. This first Lord Holland of the new house was a political adventurer, whose social joviality made him many friends at his table; but the great public which had not dined with him hated "the public defaulter of unaccounted millions" more bitterly than any other Minister of his time, and the profits of his offices could never buy the earldom he coveted. Yet it may be said of him that he ran away with a Duke's daughter in most admirable fashion, and that from this runaway match came Charles James Fox.

Before all things Holland House is a shrine of Charles James Fox. Among other relics are his crutch-handled walking-stick, the Sword of Prudence, "presented to the Rt. Hon. Cs. Js. Fox, with the warmest respect, by a Briton," and the fowling-piece and pistols given him by Catherine of Russia. His watch and seals, his pen, pencil-case and fruit-knife are in the red drawing-room. His statue is in the garden walk, his bust in the entrance hall and breakfast-room, his portrait in oil, in pastel, in miniature, looks from the walls. He died at Chiswick; but one of the last acts of his life was to visit Holland House, walking about it and within it to call to mind bygone days.

In his time and after him the great Lady Holland was keeping her circle in Holland House. These were, indeed, the house's great days. Lord Holland had restored it, and Lady Holland filled it with wits and authors, statesmen and travellers, who elbowed for places at her uncomfortable dinners and suffered their imperious hostess in her most fretful moods with a meekness which was better understood by their own generation than it can ever be by ours. Thus to the house in which Addison died came Sheridan and the precise Macaulay, Doctor Parr and Byron, four Lord Chancellors—Thurlow, Eldon, Brougham and Lyndhurst—Canova and Sir Humphrey Davy, Napoleon's Montholon and Bertrand, Talleyrand and Metternich, the Humboldts and Tom Moore, Grattan and Curran. Forty years of literature, art, science and politics breakfasted and dined in Sir Walter Cope's old house at Kensington.

Holland House in its last state takes the form of a capital E with a short middle stroke. The entrance hall is in the east wing. Our illustration shows it, a panelled room with antlers upon the walls. The two busts on the right are those of Henri Quatre and Napoleon.

The head of the stairway from the inner hall is hung with a Flemish tapestry of Isaac blessing Jacob, a subject appropriate enough in a house which has been ruled again and again by a fortunate younger son.

Two of our illustrations show the Gilt Room, which is on the first floor, its windows showing themselves to left and right of the central porch. The middle window lights a curious recess, a room within a room. The walls of the gilt chamber are covered with panels very distinct from and much more elaborately contoured than the usual arcaded Jacobean type as at Aston. Within them are painted alternately the crosslet of Rich and the fleur-de-lys from the arms of Fox, which decoration, excepting, of course, the Fox emblem, is said to have remained untouched since the days when the room was decorated for a fête to Charles I. and Henrietta Maria. Their medallions are on the chimney-pieces, and were originally by Francis Cleyn, but they were restored under the hand and direction of Watts, the painter, who lived so long



IN THE CHINA ROOM.

in a relation to the Holland family, which recalls the position of an Italian artist under the patronage of some great Italian house of the Renaissance. The broad ribs of the plaster ceiling are as richly decorated as those at Langleys, and the panels are filled with Renaissance scrolls alternating with the signs of the Zodiac as at Sizergh. It is a copy of an original one at Melbury, dated 1612, and was added by the late Lord Ilchester in 1894.

The White Parlour has its oak wainscot painted in white and gold. The scheme is very refined, the fluted pilasters, the strapwork of the frieze and the little Temple fronts centring the large panels, and having in their own centre the initial H, forming a restrained yet rich design. Its chimney-piece resembles that in the Blickling dining-room. The two great chests studded with nail-heads, which are seen on either side of the fireplace, are, on the authority of legend, the chests in which old Sir Stephen Fox hoarded his great wealth. Legend has here more truth than might be guessed, for the chests are indeed those of Sir Stephen, who used them for the safe keeping of documents relating to his office of Paymaster-General.

Of the China Room, so called from its collection of rare porcelain, we give the rich chimney-piece and hearth. The walls are covered with leather in the Spanish-Dutch style. The great Breakfast Room, hung with Genoese velvet, is remarkable for its tapestries, of which the Triumph of Bacchus and Love and the Arts are illustrated by us.