BOLSOVER CASTLE,

DERBYSHIRE.

BOLSOVER is a castle perched high in the air upon a beak of rock, a landmark for many a mile of the valley of Scarsdale. The site is one which, in the old and troubled times, could not have long remained without its castle to crown it, and the castle, once built, kept Bolsover a notable place until Cromwell's cannon ended the day of English castles. The Domesday Commissioners wrote down Bolsover as in the hands of that William Peverel of the Peak whose name gave Sir Walter Scott a high-sounding title for a romance. Romance had, long before Sir Walter's time, been busy with William Peverel, whom the Elizabethans, undiscouraged by the absence of supporting facts, described as a son of William the Conqueror by the daughter of Ingelric, the founder of St. Martin's-le-Grand. Putting aside this scandal in a pious family, we have William Peverel as lord of many manors and owner of a great part of the city of Nottingham. He is followed by another William Peverel of Nottingham, his son or grandson. This second William was one of our commanders in the great battle of the Standard in 1138. He was a partisan of King Stephen, losing his castle of Nottingham to Maude, the empress, who set William Paganel to keep it. Nottingham must have been an uneasy holding for the empress's forces, for on a dark night, during Paganel's absence, the old lord came home again, stormed his own castle, and drove Maude's men from the town. But King Stephen's was the losing side to hold by. In 1153 Henry of Anjou was strong enough



THE WESTERN FRONT.



THE RIDING SCHOOL.



THE SOUTH-WEST SIDE OF THE NEW BUILDING.

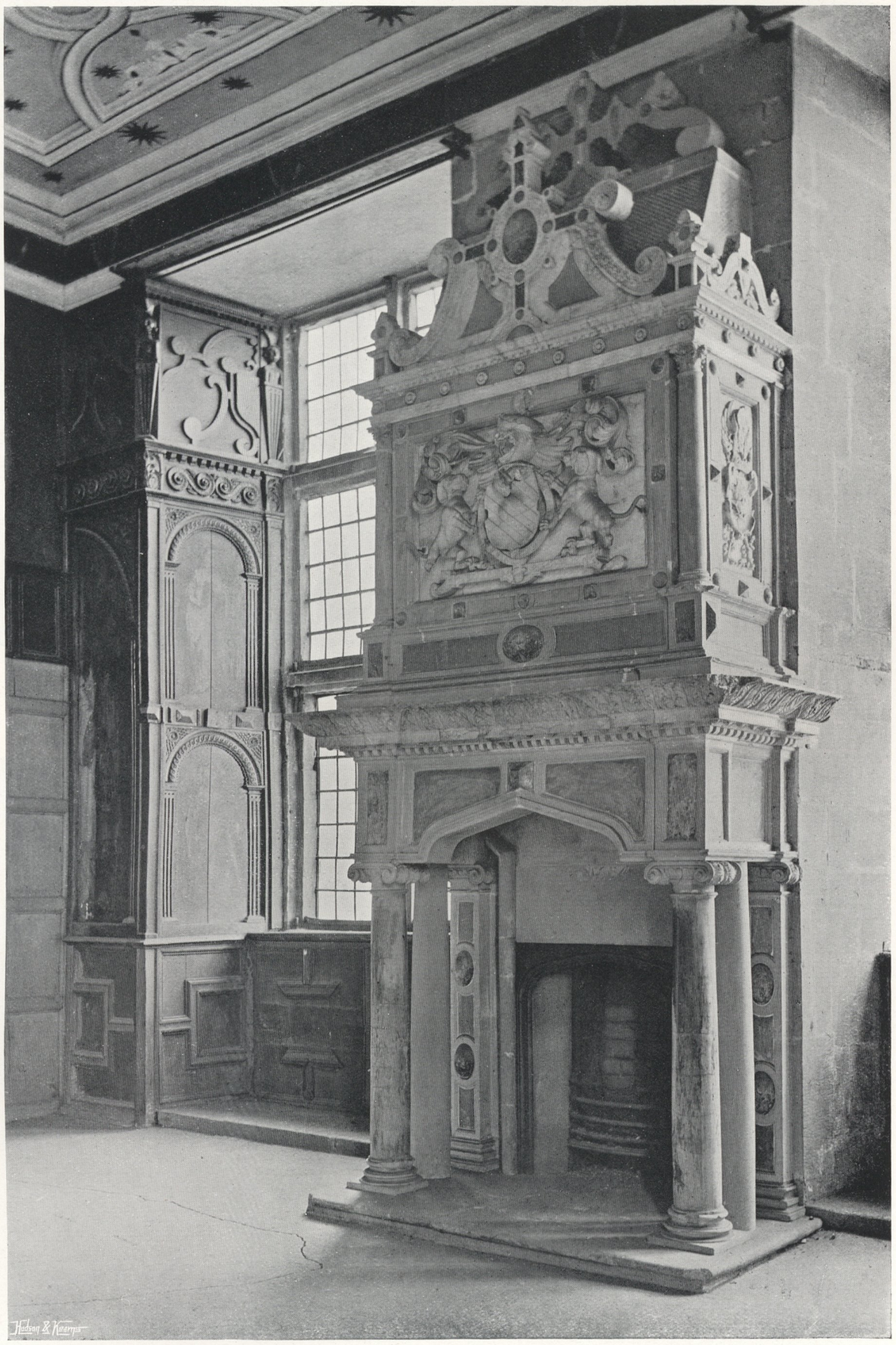
to make a grant of Peverel's lands to Ranulf, Earl of Chester, who got little good of them, seeing that he died the same year, and, if we may believe the tale of the country, poisoned by him whom he had supplanted. Peverel knew that his cup was full, and when Henry of Anjou moved North in 1155, the acknowledged King of England, the lord of Bolsover hurried to the safety of a monastery, and changed his helm for the greater security of a shaven crown. Even a shaven head might not keep a man from the vengeance of Henry of Anjou, as an archbishop was thereafter to learn, and as Henry drew near William Peverel gathered up the skirts of his monk's gown and fled before his enemy; fled away so fast and so far that he is never heard of any more. Bolsover Castle, and all other pieces of the great Peverel holding, now remained generally in the hands of the King, and many governors ruled there, for it



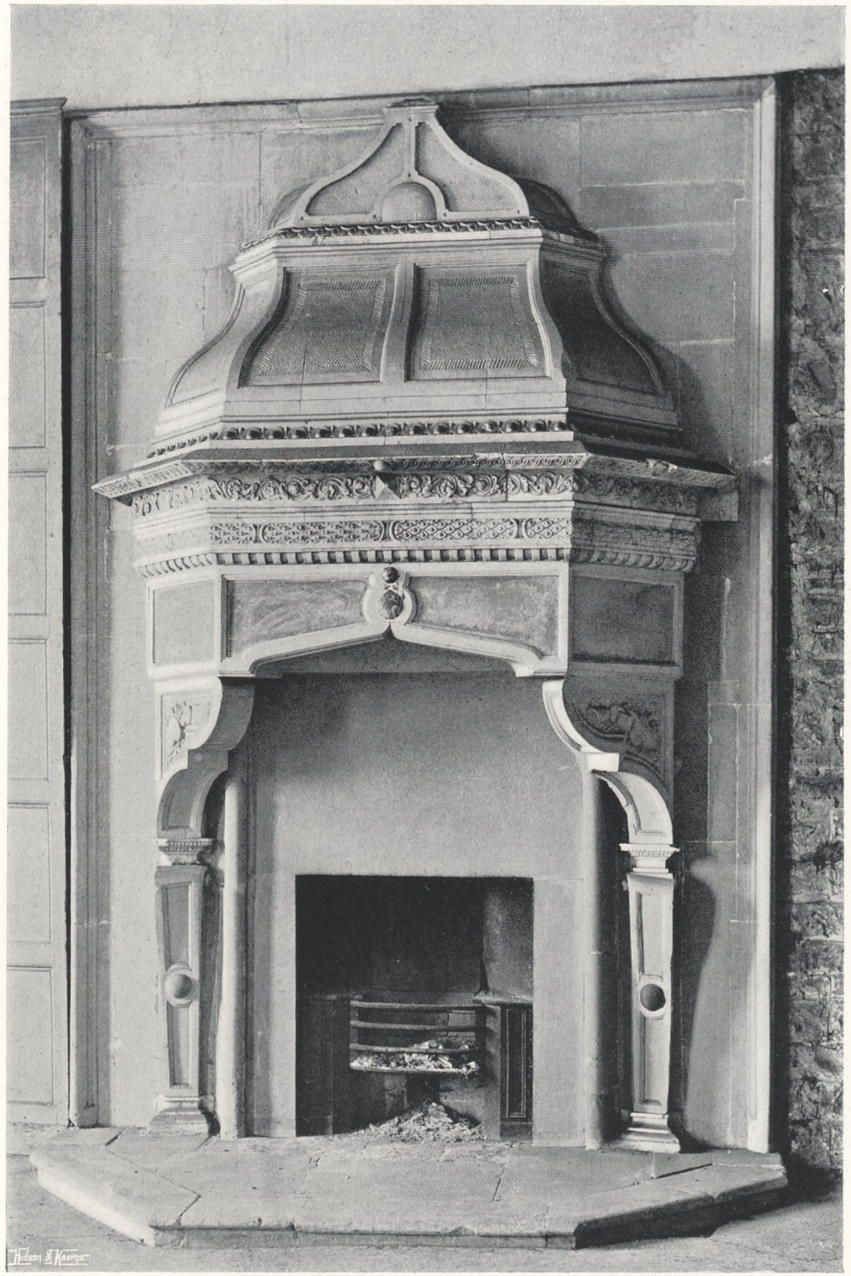
THE PILLAR-ROOM.

was deemed unwise that this strong place should be allowed to pass from the Crown's own keeping. In the fifteenth century, however, its importance was failing, and under Edward VI. it came to the Shrewsbury Talbots. George Talbot, the sixth Earl, who had Bolsover, was a figure in that long chain of marriages linked with the famous Bess of Hardwicke. He was her fourth husband, and bitterly as he afterwards repented of the match, he had so earnestly desired it that in his case as in previous cases business-like Bess had imposed her own terms and conditions, and on the same February day which saw their wedding, Talbot's son Gilbert, afterwards the seventh Earl of Shrewsbury, was married, as a boy of fifteen or sixteen years, to Bess's daughter Mary Cavendish of Chatsworth. Gilbert Talbot, a Knight of the Garter, and Elizabeth's Ambassador to Henri Quatre, made a lease for a thousand years of Bolsover to his brother-in-law, Sir Charles Cavendish, who bought it outright in 1613, and began to erect the new castle, having already purchased and started building operations at Welbeck.

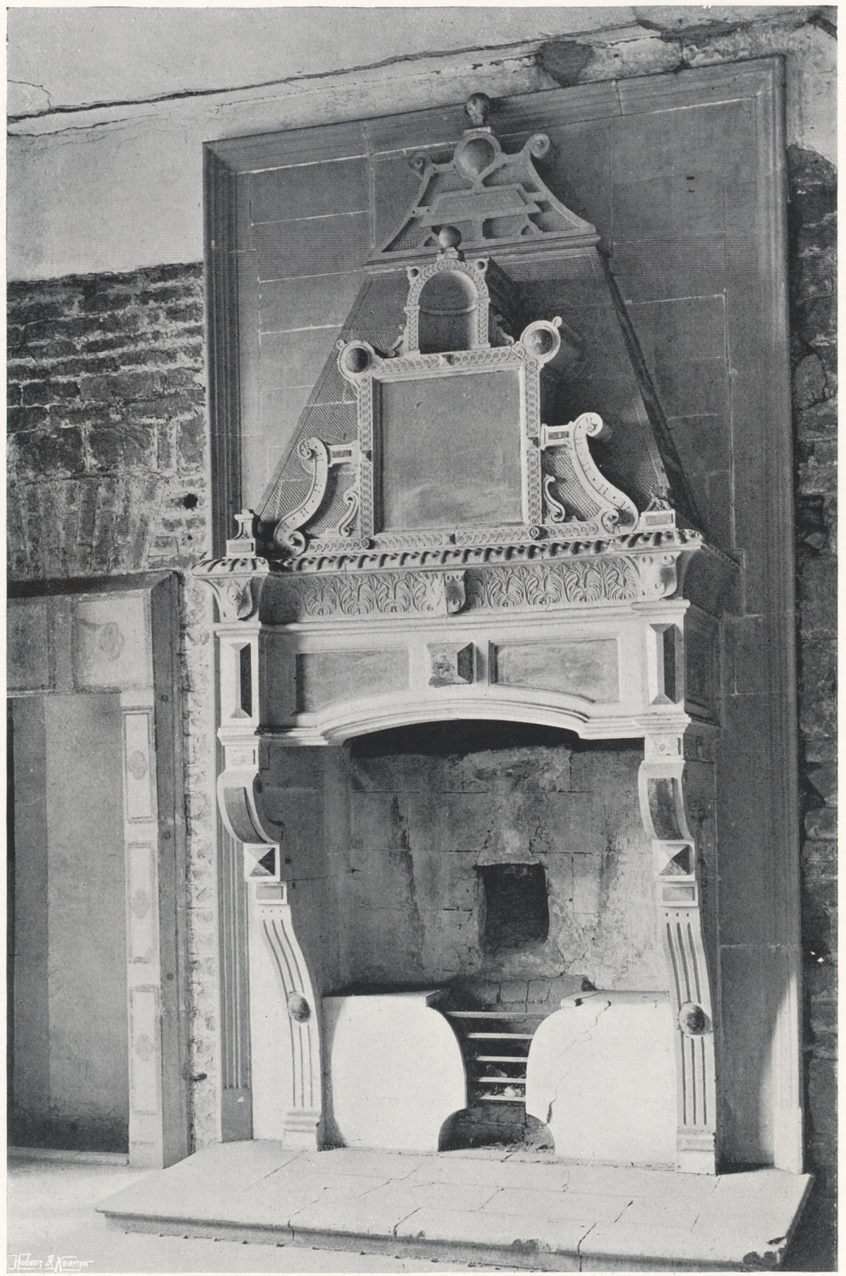
Popular legend credits Bess of Hardwicke herself with much of the building of Bolsover. She had indeed the hearty passion for building which took so many of the rich folk in the years of the English Renascence, and for so many of her eighty-seven years was she at her house-building, that the word went round that death would pass her by so long as trowels and hods were busy upon her palaces. The end came with a bitter frost, during which her masons stood idle, and with that the sands of the wonderful old lady ran out. She had built Chatsworth, Oldcotes and Hardwick, but she died some five years before the new work of Bolsover began; and it is to her son Charles that we owe this entirely original and interesting house. The old castle was probably ruinous. In any case, he removed it, and a single relic remains in the thirteenth century archway which joins the mass of the now ruinous great gallery to the wall without the keep. But though the keep was gone, its site and the foundations of its high standing rock remained, and Cavendish decided to use it for the main building of his new home, whose size, character and plan were thereby fixed and controlled. At a time when architects were



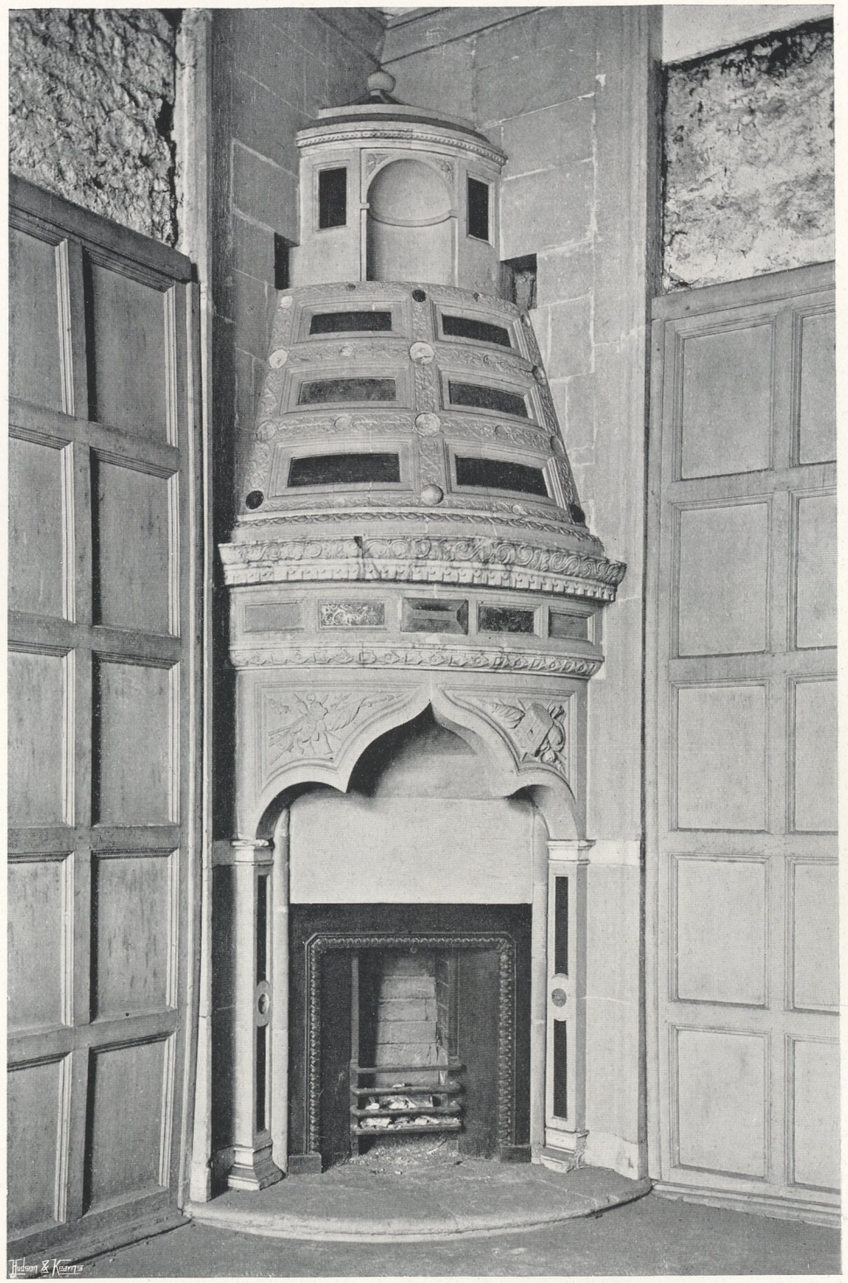
THE STAR CHAMBER.



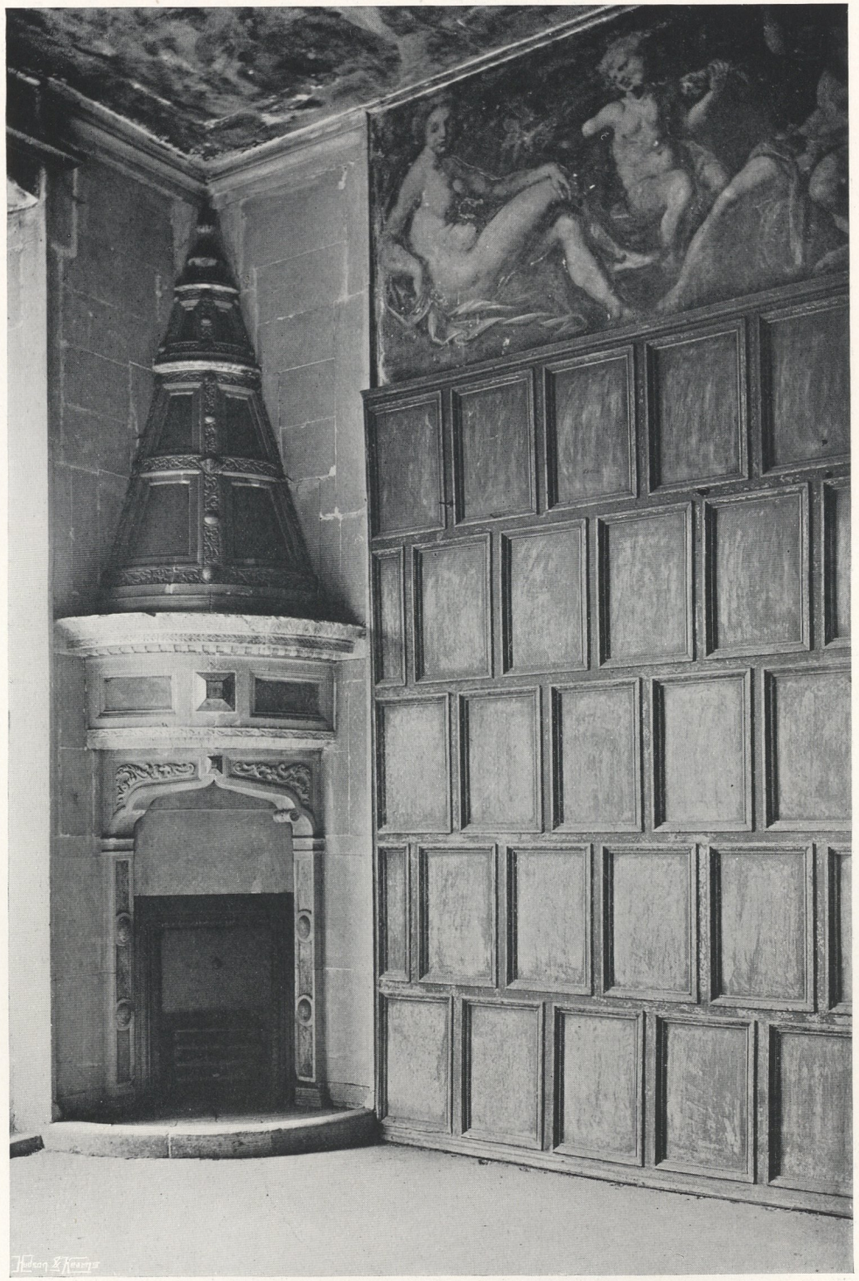
THE SOUTH ROOM.



IN THE WEST ROOM.

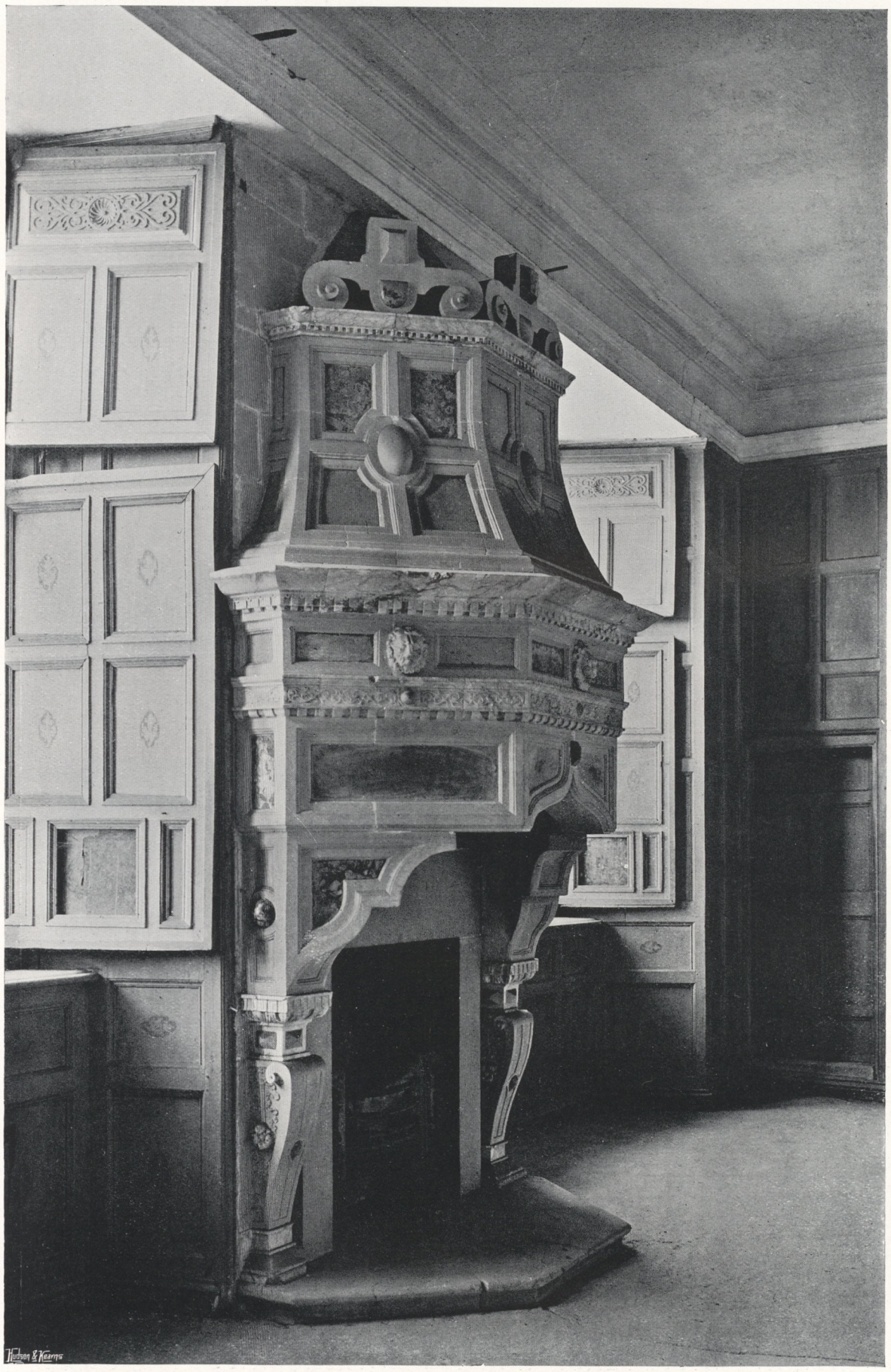


A CORNER CHIMNEY-PIECE.



THE PAINTED ANTE-ROOM.

seeking the effect of spaciousness and extent, of horizontal lines dominating the vertical, Sir Charles's work at Bolsover sits restrainedly and four-square on its narrow base, and lifts itself loftily in the air, overtopping all around it. But the skyline has been well considered; though the roof is flat, turrets and chimneys rise above it, and the single-storey lodges and rooms of the symmetrical forecourt complete the picturesque grouping. Although the general work, both in line and detail, belongs to its age, a connection with its past, a note of harmony with its site and circumstance, is kept by the outside crenellation and the inside vaulting. The latter constructive feature was no longer—had not, indeed, for some time been—the mode, great oaken beams and connecting rafters having fully obtained as the framework for boarded floor and plastered ceiling. But at Bolsover both basement and principal floor are stone vaulted, and vaulted with a strength and finish of workmanship, an elegance and elaboration of ornament fully equal, in its own Renascent style, to the choice productions of the Gothic craftsmen. The Pillar Room, which we illustrate, so fully shows this that no further description is necessary. The same room also gives a fine example of Bolsover's most remarkable feature—its collection of varied chimney-pieces in stone and marble. They are of their age, and yet original and unlike their contemporaries in other houses, because of the touch of Gothicism which Bolsover exhibits. They are everywhere; the seven examples we give by no means exhaust the list; even the little detached rooms in the centre of the forecourt possess them. They were consciously intended as a leading feature, and their decorative value as elaborate pieces of design and ornament is enhanced by their all springing forth from a stone surface surrounded by a stone moulding to separate it from the abutting panelling of wood. In many cases, such as in the drawing-room and in the Star Chamber—so-called from its ceiling devices—this panelling is extant, while elsewhere it has been carried away and the rooms lie deserted, though the main building stands to-day as sound as its builder left it. This part of the castle is but a small



THE DRAWING-ROOM.

portion of the entire scheme such as it was carried out by Sir William, who succeeded his father in 1617. His were the "new buildings" begun in 1628, of great size, "with gigantic doorways and unwieldy mouldings," showing a somewhat later and more purely classic style, such as we connect with the name of Inigo Jones. The new building, however, has nothing of his refinement of design. Much of this now lies in ruin, but the great riding school, with its long line of roof broken by a series of pedimented dormers, still stands complete. Here we have far better work than in the new building. It comes much nearer to the true Inigo Jones standard, and reminds one of the work at Raynham or at the Arbury stables. Although on a larger and more elaborate scale, it bears much similarity to the Thorpe stables, which Webb built while still under the directing hand of his great kinsman. Its builder, Sir William, was one of the most magnificent men of his day.

In his youth he had marked the Court as the orchard in which he was to shake the tree, and his policy brought him in the end to high places and their discomfort. From King James he had a viscount's coronet, and the Earldom of Newcastle came from King Charles in 1628. In 1633 King Charles was at Welbeck with the splendid Court of his earlier years. Wonderful pomp surrounded the King in these Derbyshire wilds. Ben Jonson himself devised the costly masque of "Love's Welcome at Welbeck," and the second masque of "Love's Welcome at Bolsover," played when King and Court came to the new buildings to a glorious dinner upon which £4,000 was squandered. But Cavendish was playing desperately for place and money, and the £4,000 of his dinner bill was with him a deliberate cast upon the red. When his hand came nigh the bottom of the bag the luck turned. Places and sinecures came in plenty. He was made Privy Councillor and Governor of Charles, Prince of Wales, whose education he planned upon a modification of the old Persian scheme by which a prince should be taught to ride, to shoot with the bow, and to speak the truth. To ride William Cavendish might well teach him, for the tutor was the chief expounder of the rites of the ancient *manège*, and the Prince came from his hands "the handsomest and most comely horseman in the world, and as knowing and understanding in the art as any man." For the rest, Prince Charles was taught that high policy of the realm demanded of him constant and assiduous courtesy to all women, to whom the truth is not commonly told, and later years showed the Prince in this, too, no inapt scholar.

The beginning of the war found the courtier justified of his Bolsover extravagances. As a rich man and a great lord he took the field, and made a respectable campaign in the face of Hotham and Fairfax. But the yellow Press of the



THE GATEWAY OF THE NEW BUILDINGS.

seventeenth century, with its pamphlets and lampoons, followed him with criticism, of which my lord was impatient. At Marston Moor he carried no bâton, charging as a private gentleman at the head of a troop of others, and soon afterwards he washed his hands of the war, sailing to Hamburg with his two sons and his brother, away in dudgeon from "the laughter of the Court." The Marquess of Newcastle, as he had been created in 1643, was content sullenly to watch the end from over-sea, dwelling in Antwerp and consoling himself with his great book on horsemanship, whose splendid plates make it still the prize of the book-collector. He had left England with £90 in his pocket, having lost, according to his lady's story, a fortune of near a million, figures which speak eloquently of the courtier's trade under a Stuart monarchy. But he does not seem to have come in his exile to that pinch of want which harassed many cavaliers on their travels. A man of letters married to a literary lady, the time passed, and at the Restoration he returned to have his marquessate of Newcastle changed for a dukedom and to be greeted as the Loyal Duke in respect of his somewhat nice and grudging loyalty. His second wife, Margaret Lucas, of a family whose sons were valiant and whose daughters virtuous, added to her inherited virtue the qualities of a fantastic blue stocking. Her Duke and she made plays and wrote verses and philosophy together, but Pepys' words, "a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman, and he an ass," give us that light-hearted Court's view of this old-fashioned couple, and the Duke retired at last to Bolsover.

It had gone ill with Bolsover during the war. The Parliament men from Sheffield marched upon it in 1644 and took it with little opposition, giving the garrison "fair and moderate articles" of surrender. In it were great guns, one of them an eighteen-pounder, six-score muskets, with pikes, halberds, powder and match. The Parliament put its own garrison into Bolsover, but at the war's end an order came to level it and sell the stones.

Whether there was little market for building material in this remote corner, or conveyance from its rock was difficult, we know not, but luckily the order was not carried out. Bolsover, decayed and deserted, but still full of interest, yet stands a precious relic of the fine building of a stately age.



THE RIDING SCHOOL FROM THE GREAT WALL.