RIBSTON HALL,

YORKSHIRE.

WELL known to most visitors to Knaresborough, that most picturesque old town of Yorkshire, and in a beautiful part of the valley of the winding Nidd, before it flows out into the open plain, stands the historic house of Major Dent. The region is one of great natural beauties and of high historic interest, and within the walls of Ribston Hall secret discussions have been held which have had their influence upon English history. Here, in ancient times, in the parish of Hunsingore, was founded by Robert de Ros a commandery of the Knights of Solomon's Temple, and in September, 1444, the Bishop of Philippi dedicated and reconsecrated the chapel at Ribston. When the Dissolution came, Ribston fell into the hands of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, the King's brother-in-law, much enriched with the spoils of many monastic possessions. But the Duke could not retain all his vast landed estates, and in 1545 he sold the manor of Ribston to Henry Goodricke of Wisbeach in the Isle of Ely, brother of Thomas Goodricke, Bishop of Ely and Lord Chancellor in the time of Edward VI. The Goodrickes converted the ecclesiastical possession at Ribston into a residential domain, and there was built a manor house in which they dwelt, more than a century before the present edifice arose upon the site. The situation must have been tempting to one who wished to establish himself in that romantic part of England, for there was much of wood and water, a winding river, a healthful situation, a fishery and much opportunity for sport. The fine eminence upon which the house stands is more than half encompassed by the



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river Nidd, and the estate and park are widely extended, and have been developed, in the course of centuries, into a seat which ranks among the most important in Yorkshire, as our illustrations will testify. Henry Goodricke died in London in 1556, and was succeeded by his second son Richard in the possession of what he described in his will as "my mannor howse called Ribston Hall," with other neighbouring estates. Before the middle of the next century we find it in the possession of John Goodricke, who was created a baronet in 1641. He was a strong Royalist, and suffered very heavily in the King's cause, to which he early showed devotion. Also in the year 1641 he married the daughter and co-heiress of Stephen Norcliffe of York, but was very soon caught up in the vortex of civil war, and saw little more of his young bride.



THE SALOON.



BY GRINLING GIBBONS.

When hostilities broke out he had command of a troop under the Earl of Newcastle, which he led at the siege of Bradford, in December, 1642, when he was seriously wounded, and his horse killed under him with a scythe. Soon afterwards he was taken prisoner, and, after being held in durance at Manchester, was sent to the Tower of London, where he languished several years, during which time his wife died. There is preserved at Ribston Hall a French Bible, which he had brought from Tours as a present from his father, and when he was in prison his mother sent it to him for his comfort, enjoining him to care for it well, because it contained his father's handwriting. The imprisoned Cavalier wrote in it a characteristic sentence, which still remains: "I have found by experience that the Bible is most profitably read when a man reads it in his mother tongue, however he understands it in foreign languages, and (as the food we are

accustomed to is) soonest digested into proper nourishment." The whole estate was valued at about £650 per annum, and Goodricke was allowed to compound, after all his sufferings, in the sum of £1,200. He subsequently married the daughter of the third Lord Fairfax.

The second baronet, to whom Ribston Hall owes much of its character, was his son by his first wife, and was also a man of very great importance in his time. He was a soldier, and commanded a regiment of foot, disbanded in 1679, but meanwhile he had proceeded to Madrid as Envoy Extraordinary. There he got into difficulties owing to the anger of the populace at the policy of Charles II. He had already carried out a great deal of work at his ancestral home, which he repaired very extensively, if he did not actually rebuild a large portion of the edifice. The date 1674 is above the entrance door, which has Ionic pillars and a well-executed pediment and shield of arms. The main frontage, without remarkable features, is a very elegant and typical illustration of the newer spirit in English domestic architecture, which was tending to displace the last elements of the earlier forms. The great saloon, which is 44ft. long by 31ft. wide, is very handsomely decorated in the classic style, and is said to have been completed in his time, though we should place much of its decoration, if not of its form, a century later. The library also bears evidence of the great care devoted to the beautifying of the place. It is undoubtedly of Sir Henry's time, and has fine examples of wood-carving in the Grinling Gibbons' style, including well-designed and hanging birds, fruit, leaves and flowers executed after the manner of the master.



ON THE SOUTH FRONT.

This Sir Henry Goodricke, the second baronet, who thus created the house anew, was a very active supporter of the Prince of Orange, as may be read in "Reresby's Memoirs." Indeed, he took a chief part in establishing the new King in the North, and the Earl of Devonshire, at that time avoiding the Court of James, and busy with the building of Chatsworth, was often at Ribston Hall, together with Lord Danby, concerting the measures by which the Revolution should be brought about. When the time was ripe Goodricke went to Knaresborough and interrupted a meeting of Roman Catholic magistrates assembled in the Town Hall there, and informing them that the authority under which they were sitting had been superseded, proclaimed William III. King. He was rewarded for his services by being made Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance in 1689, as well as a Privy Councillor, and

he held the former office until June, 1702. He was also one of the Commissioners to enquire into the conduct of Torrington at the battle of Beachy Head, in which that officer kept his fleet "in being," thus establishing a strategic formula hotly discussed in modern times.

There is preserved at Ribston Hall a Kip engraving of the place, the date of which is about 1674, showing the long frontage of the house, with its central door, many-windowed wall, cornice and characteristic roofs. Buildings are depicted behind forming a quadrangle and stable quarters, with bell cupola, and an open space and gates are seen beyond. In front of the house is shown an enclosed space of turf, with vases on pedestals, and at the inner angles are seen handsome garden-houses. To this terrace there is a handsome balustrade or edging, with a noble descent to a lower garden, which overlooks the river from the boundary wall. This latter is a remarkable feature in Knyff's drawing, for it seems to surround the place, and to be constructed almost as a fortified enceinte, with angle bastions, quite appropriate, it might be said, to the home of the Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance. The house and garden are depicted as standing high above the river, and there are gardens and orchards both inside the wall and on the river bank on the right side of the house ; on the left is another enclosed garden in formal manner, with sentinel-like yews and garden-houses, while outside in the park are herds of deer and distant woods. All this may or may not have been there. Kip and his fellow-artists were very imaginative ; but, certainly, many changes have passed over Ribston Hall since that time, though it still remains a fine place, with gardens of more modern form, and the trees, which were then and subsequently planted, have now grown to great size. It is in every sense a country place of eminence and distinction, besides being the birthplace of a most noted apple.

