CHICHELEY HALL, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

CHICHELEY HALL, the fine old Buckinghamshire manor house which we depict, may be traced back to a race of those prosperous traders and merchants who rose to such prominence, replacing to a large extent the old nobility, in the Tudor age. The house stands near the northern extremity of the shire, some three miles from the old town of Newport Pagnell, and the property belonged to Tickford Priory, founded by Ralph Paganell as a cell of Marmoutier, until the Dissolution, when it was purchased from the Crown by Anthony Cave, whose father, Richard Cave of Stanford, was greatly advanced owing to his intimate friendship with Cromwell, the vicar-general, but died before he could share in the great spoliation. Anthony was bred to the trade of a merchant of the Staple of Calais, but, desiring to reside in England, Cromwell procured him the lease of Tickford Abbey, Bucks, in 1546. Partly through this association with his father's friend he grew very rich, and chiefly invested his wealth in lands in Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. He is described on his memorial brass in Chicheley church as a former merchant of the Staple of Calais and "Dominus" of Chicheley. This old merchant and landowner was the builder of the original Chicheley Hall, and some parts of his ancient structure, erected about the year 1550, are incorporated in the present edifice, which was built by Sir Anthony Chester at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Anthony Cave's association with the existing house may be found in some of the old features retained, and in particular in a room panelled with early oak, where is a beam on which may be read the moral injunction playing upon his name: "Cave ne Deum offendas; Cave ne proximum lædas; Cave ne tua negligentia familiam deseras; 1550."



SOUTH FRONT.

Anthony Cave died in 1558, and his estate at Chicheley passed with his eldest daughter and co-heiress, Judith, to her husband, who was also her cousin, William Chester, citizen and draper of London, eldest son of Sir William Chester, M.P., Lord Mayor of London, a munificent merchant of the City, who loved learning and was concerned in the founding and endowment of Christ's Hospital and St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The son of William and Judith Chester, named Anthony after his maternal grandfather, succeeded to the estates on the death of the widow of the latter in 1577. He was a prominent man in his day, who took an active part in local affairs, raised a troop of horse in 1588, was Sheriff of Buckinghamshire in 1602-3, and was created a baronet in 1620. He was succeeded by his son Sir Anthony, the second baronet, who, having married the daughter of Sir John Peyton of Doddington, without his father's consent, was partially disinherited. He was in some pecuniary difficulty, but is remembered as a valiant Cavalier, who commanded a troop of horse at Naseby. His conspicuous loyalty in those troublous times drew down upon himself and his estates the vengeance of the Parliament, and in 1645 the garrison of Newport Pagnell sacked and plundered Chicheley Hall, of which the rents were sequestrated. Overwhelmed by these misfortunes and in peril of his life, Sir Anthony fled to Holland, having transferred a great part of his estate to his "good brother" Henry. A letter still remains in which, on the eve of his departure, he besought this brother to be "as a husband to my wife, and a father to my children." Henry, like the good brother he was, had a nominal possession only; but the Cavalier, returning to England in 1650, broken alike in fortune and health, found his house wasted and in ruins. He died in the following year, and two portraits now at the hall are attributed to the gallant but unfortunate gentleman and his wife. The lady survived her husband forty years, and died at Chicheley in 1692, in her 89th year.



EAST FRONT.

Sir Anthony, third of the name, one of their thirteen children, succeeded to the shattered estate on his father's death in 1651, but on the death of his uncle, Sir Henry Chester, K.B., in 1669, his fortunes changed, and his son Sir John, who succeeded him in 1698, was able to rebuild the house, which he did at great cost between the years 1699 and 1704. His figure, as a blue-eyed, fair-haired boy of twelve or thirteen, with his brother Anthony, is to be seen in a painting at Chicheley Hall. While he was still under age he married Anne, daughter of William Wollaston, and the lady having a fortune of £10,000, with more in prospect, the fortunes of the Chesters were repaired. He rebuilt the old house, therefore, with little regard to expense, in the style of architecture favoured in his time. It is a great mass of red brick, with stone facings, and a flat roof, very characteristic and imposing, with a certain calm dignity in its features. The south frontage is divided into three compartments, that in the centre being curiously raised above the others, and the wall surface has fluted Corinthian pilasters at intervals, while the door and windows are varied in their stone architraving, some of which is not quite happy in design, a remark which particularly applies to the singular pediment of the doorway. The most ornate feature is the cornice over the second storey windows sculptured with masks and cornucopias. The east and west fronts are in similar style, but plainer, and on the south-west is a range of quaint old stables, while the embattled tower of the church rises amid the trees close at hand. The pile of buildings is certainly very striking in character, but there are designs in existence which show that the house itself was to have been more lavishly adorned, with statuary upon the parapet.

The interior is both beautiful and interesting. Entering, we find the hall very noble and imposing, with exquisite marbles and glorious panelling. There are two Corinthian arcades, through one of which the great staircase is reached, a magnificent example of woodwork, inlaid with cedar and mahogany. The panelling has a cornice of the key pattern carved in wood, over which the balustered gallery has a fine effect. Beautiful portraits, excellent old furniture, many choice art works and rich carpets and rugs are the features of the hall; and lovely panelling, moulded and



SOUTH-EAST CORNER.

inlaid, fine chimney-pieces of marble, pilasters and carvings worthy of Grinling Gibbons, give rare distinction to other parts of the interior.

Ascending the noble staircase we reach the library, which is at the top of the house, and is, perhaps, the most interesting of the apartments. It has a certain kinship with the Vatican library, in that the books are concealed. The walls are panelled with oak, the large spaces being divided by fluted pilasters, which open with a curious key, and disclose the volumes on the shelves, with two tiers of drawers below. The materials of the old house were freely used in the new structure, as in the oak-panelled room already



THE HALL GALLERY.



CORRIDORS OF HALL.

alluded to, which has the punning inscription of Anthony Cave. This panelling had been painted many a time, but the pigment was carefully removed in 1872 and the inscription disclosed. Part of the old staircase of oak probably came from the ancient structure, and has some curious features. A massive wooden chimney-piece of later date is also noticeable, being adorned with the shield of Chester and Cave, quarterly, carved in oak, with figures of soldiers, with swords and halberds, painted in oils on either side.

The work of building was in progress during many years, the main structure being completed

about 1701, and the cost was enormous. Mr. R. E. Chester Waters, who has written a fine genealogy of the Chesters of Chicheley, says, indeed, that it was always believed in the family that for less than the money spent Sir John Chester might have purchased the great house of Gayhurst, which was then for sale, and was purchased, with its estate, in 1704 by the son of Sir Nathan Wright, the Lord Keeper. Evidently, however, Sir John Chester preferred his ancestral seat. He was a well-known sportsman, and one of the Gentlemen of Queen Anne's Privy Chamber. The seventh baronet, who left no legitimate descendants, and whose uncle succeeded to the



STEPS IN HALL.



IN THE BILLIARD-ROOM.

title, cut off the entail of the whole of the family estates, and left them to his maternal cousin, Charles Bagot, second son of Sir Walter Wagstaffe Bagot, Bart., on condition that he and his heirs should take the name and bear the arms of Chester. This gentleman died in 1793, and is mentioned with respect by Cowper, who frequently visited Chicheley from Olney.

The old estate is still in the hands of this family, which represents, but not in blood, the old possessors of the place. Chicheley Hall is now the residence of Sir George Farrar, D.S.O., who gained this latter distinction when serving as Major on the Staff of the Colonial Division in the late war in South Africa, and who had the further honour of being mentioned in despatches, thus carrying on the old traditions of loyalty to King and country which have been previously alluded to in this article as characteristic of the owners of this fine old country home.



THE BOUDOIR.