DRAKELOWE,

DERBYSHIRE.

DRAKELOWE is in Derbyshire, near Burton and the Staffordshire border, the water of Trent skirting one side of the park. The curt sentences of Domesday record that among the wild lands of Nigel of Stafford was a manor in "Drachelawe" and "Hedcote" which Elric had, Elric who had perchance gone down at Hastings before the companions of Nigel, who in 1086 was riding as lord over the lands which Elric and Godric of Siward and Elnod and many a one more had held before the Fighting Man banner had fallen.

Learned antiquaries assert that Nigel thus named "of Stafford" was of the race of the lords of Conches, nephew of that Raoul of Tosny who, though the bearing of Duke William's gonfanon was the hereditary right, would not lift it at Hastings lest he should be the less forward in the press of fighting knights. Raoul was of the same stock as the Duke himself, and if we allow this ancestry to the lord of Drakelowe, his descendants can claim a pedigree unmatched in Europe for antiquity, an origin mounting with Ivars and Rognwalds into the myth-history of the Norsemen. Every line of the Domesday entry of this manor where Nigel has four ploughlands in his demesne is of peculiar interest to the antiquary. For, amazing to tell, the heir male of Nigel of Stafford has still his home upon the lands of his ancestor, Sir Robert Gresley of Drakelowe representing the twenty-eighth generation of his house. The centuries have gone by, dynasties have fled away, the grave has entombed a three dozen of our sovereigns, yet the children of Nigel stiil hold to



THE HALL DOOR: EXIT.

Drakelowe. A Gresley was in arms against Henry III. and yet did not lose Drakelowe utterly ; another rode against Charles I., and the Drakelowe family was undisturbed by the Restoration. In the long line of Gresleys there must have been plotters and gamesters, men of wasteful fancies and lovers of change—a long pedigree never fails to record such—but Drakelowe remains unforfeited, unsold and unbartered. The spirit of the bear in her cave, of the mole in his chamber, must have been ever in this Gresley strain. What English family could show the like record, unless it be Shirley of Ettington, and though Shirley have a Domesday ancestor's lands he is not heir of that ancestor. Nor have the energies of the family narrowed themselves in the mere blind clutching at the estate which they held in old time by the service of a rendering yearly a bow without a string, a Tutbury quiver, a dozen fledged arrows and a bozon or broad-headed bolt. Many deeds are recorded of the lords of Drakelowe. The Gresleys followed the Earl Ferrers, and Geoffrey of Gresley, living in King John's reign, was Ferrers's steward, and being made Constable of the Peak, was doubtless at the Earl's winning of that castle in the year of the Great Charter. This Geoffrey is the first whose seal is found with the vairy shield of the Gresleys, the arms of their feudal lord borne with a difference. His grandson, Sir Geoffrey of Gresley, was yet a lad when the wars of the barons with Henry III. brought Ferrers into the field, but he saw Evesham fight and all the troubles which followed, and as "our enemy and rebel who in the time of the war adhered to our enemy and rebel Simon de Montfort" Geoffrey of Gresley was proscribed by name, and Thomas Corbet had his manors until Geoffrey could redeem them at a high price. The rough days of civil war passed, but left a spirit of lawlessness alive in the North, and the generations which followed have a history full of those wild doings of which old-fashioned novelists would have us believe that life in the Middle Ages was compact. Homicide and outlawry are all that is known of the young sons of Geoffrey, and Sir Piers of Gresley, the heir, made himself known far and wide for a ruthless neighbour. Sir Piers's dame was his true helpmate, and in her widowhood we have her hyking on her two sons to the wanton murder of Walter Montgomery, whom they slew with a Cologne sword on the heath of the Wheatlands. Four of Dame Joan's cubs have murders and other felonies to their credit, one of them falling at last in civil affray.



TAPESTRY-ROOM.

The next century found better work for the Gresley's swords than cutting their neighbours' throats, and in 1415 Sir Thomas Gresley and his son Sir John brought five men-at-arms and fifteen archers over-sea to France, and doubtless led them



ENTRANCE HALL.

on the day of Agincourt. Sir John's sister earned a pension of £40 a year by being the first nurse of the little King Henry VI., her care of him being shared when the child was two years of age by Dame Alice Botiler, the governess solemnly entrusted by the Lords of the Council with power to smack infant majesty, "ainsi come le cas requerera." In spite of this foster-kinship with the house of Lancaster, the Gresleys turned Yorkist in the person of the nurse's nephew Sir John, who served Edward IV., and saw the crowning of Richard III. Gresley of Drakelowe is a baronet of James I.'s creation, a baronet of that batch of fifty-seven patents issued in June, 1611, following the first eighteen of May. In the same year he was one of those who stood up for the new order in the dispute for their precedence, even as his twentieth century descendant is one of the committee which is even now asserting the rights of the baronetage. Sir George Gresley of Drakelowe was much about the Court in his earlier years, bearing a bannerol at the burial of Prince Henry ; but although county and kinsfolk were Royalist, Sir George, a man in his sixties, armed himself for the Parliament, "the only gentleman of quality," says a contemporary account of affairs in Derbyshire, "that cordially appeared to be on our side." He served with Sir John Gell's regiment, and his estates, lying within seven miles of three garrisons of the King's men, were wasted by their troopers. He died before the Restoration and his son in his lifetime. The second baronet, a grandson, died in 1699, leaving the memory of the family miser. Later baronets, born in less troubled times, add fewer tales to the family chronicle. Sir Nigel, sixth baronet, born a younger son, was bred a lieutenant in the Navy, and brought home to Drakelowe a picture of Flora Macdonald, the Highland heroine having been carried under guard in his ship to London in 1746. Eccentric and quarrelsome Governor Philip Thicknesse could say of him that "he was brave without boasting, and was just such a man as Sterne describes his uncle Toby." An old neighbour who lived on until 1846 remembered him as the biggest man he had ever seen out of a show, a man who had to thrust himself sideways into the hall pew at Nether Sei'e. An eleventh baronet now rules at Drakelowe, one of those baronets of old creation who were bidden to represent their order at the crowning of King Edward VII. The manor of Drakelowe, although continuously in the hands of the family, has not always been their seat, and when surnames began they took theirs from the lordship of Gresley, which came to them early in the twelfth century. Drakelowe, indeed, was waste and desert for a long space from soon after the Conquest. A treatise on miracles by a twelfth century abbot of Burton tells how



CHINA LOBBY.



THE TERRACE.

two villeins fled from their lords, the Burton monks, to Drakelowe, where they had the protection of Roger of Poitou, who took up their quarrel so heartily that his men attacked the soldiers of the abbey. Vengeance fell upon the two villeins who had caused the affray. Within twenty-four hours they had fallen sick and died. Horror upon horror came upon Drakelowe; the dead villeins, rising night after night from their unquiet graves, were seen rushing about Drakelowe fields, bearing their wooden coffins on their shoulders, and sometimes changing to the likeness of bears and wild hounds. Banging their coffins against the house-walls, they would cry aloud to the quaking villagers to "bestir themselves and come." The meaning of the dreadful summons was seen when all Drakelowe sickened with a mortal sickness; two hinds and Dru, the bailiff of the Poitevin, alone escaping. Roger himself, smitten with fear, went repentant to the abbot, but the ghosts were not laid until neighbours dug up the bodies of the vampire villeins and burned their hearts on Dodefreseford Hill, an evil thing in the shape of a black crow whirring out of the last of the smoke.

"Sir George Gresley," wrote Leland in 1540, "dwelleth at the manor place of Colton," but "hath upon Trent, a mile lower than Burton town, a very fair manor place and park at Draykelo." This park at Drakelowe, says the present baronet, in an interesting note attached to the valuable history of the Gresleys, compiled by Mr. Falconer Madan, a cousin of the house, is nearly 580 acres in extent, and is fairly well wooded, with many fine old beeches and oaks. "It is, however," he adds, "the pleasure grounds and gardens which are the chief beauty of the place, many of the hollies and yews lining the walks being well over 30 feet in height." Of the house itself there have been many alterations and restorations at different periods. There is mullioning in the elevation we illustrate, but the eighteenth century has set in sashes, and house and terrace are now surmounted with a classic balustrade. The interior owes much to the owner. The hall and the tapestry rooms are, in their woodwork, ceilings and mantels, typical of the style which closed the seventeenth and opened the eighteenth century. Either, then, the owner fell away from his ideal in the matter of redecorating his house, or his thrift left so much personalty in his successor's hands that he was able to put really fine work in these two rooms. The latter suggestion is the more probable. There is much in these rooms to remind us of work at Shobdon and Ditchley, and the date of 1723 on a lead pipehead at Drakelowe is also the time when Shobdon and Ditchley were building or built. The depraved taste of the late eighteenth century turned the larger dining-room into a panorama of the Peak Country. "Sir Nigel," wrote Miss Anna Seward of Lichfield in 1794, "hath adorned one of his rooms with singular happiness. It is large, one side painted with forest scenery, whose majestic trees arch over the coved ceiling. Through them we see glades, tufted banks and ascending walks in perspective. The opposite side of the room exhibits a Peak valley, the front shows a prospect of more distant country, vieing with the beauties of the real one, admitted opposite through a crystal wall of window. Its chimney-piece, formed of spars and ores and shells, represents a grotto. Real pales, painted green and breast high, are placed a few inches from the walls and increase the power of the deception. In these are little wicket gates that, half open, invite us to ascend the seeming forest banks." The curious fancy which so moved Miss Seward still remains at Drakelowe, where the painting is attributed to Paul Sandby. Miss Seward saw it in July, but a December fire in the spar grotto shining upon silver and mahogany must be needed to bring out all the quaint incongruity of the trick. Other rooms have some notable furniture, with five beds of carven oak of Elizabethan and Jacobean work, and two more in ebony of Portuguese fashion. The family portraits are many, a gallery of ancestors from the sixteenth century onwards; and with other heirlooms is the rare jewel which is said to have been a royal gift to that daughter of the Lord Dudley who was the wife of the first baronet's great-grandfather.