KNEBWORTH HOUSE, HERTFORDSHIRE.

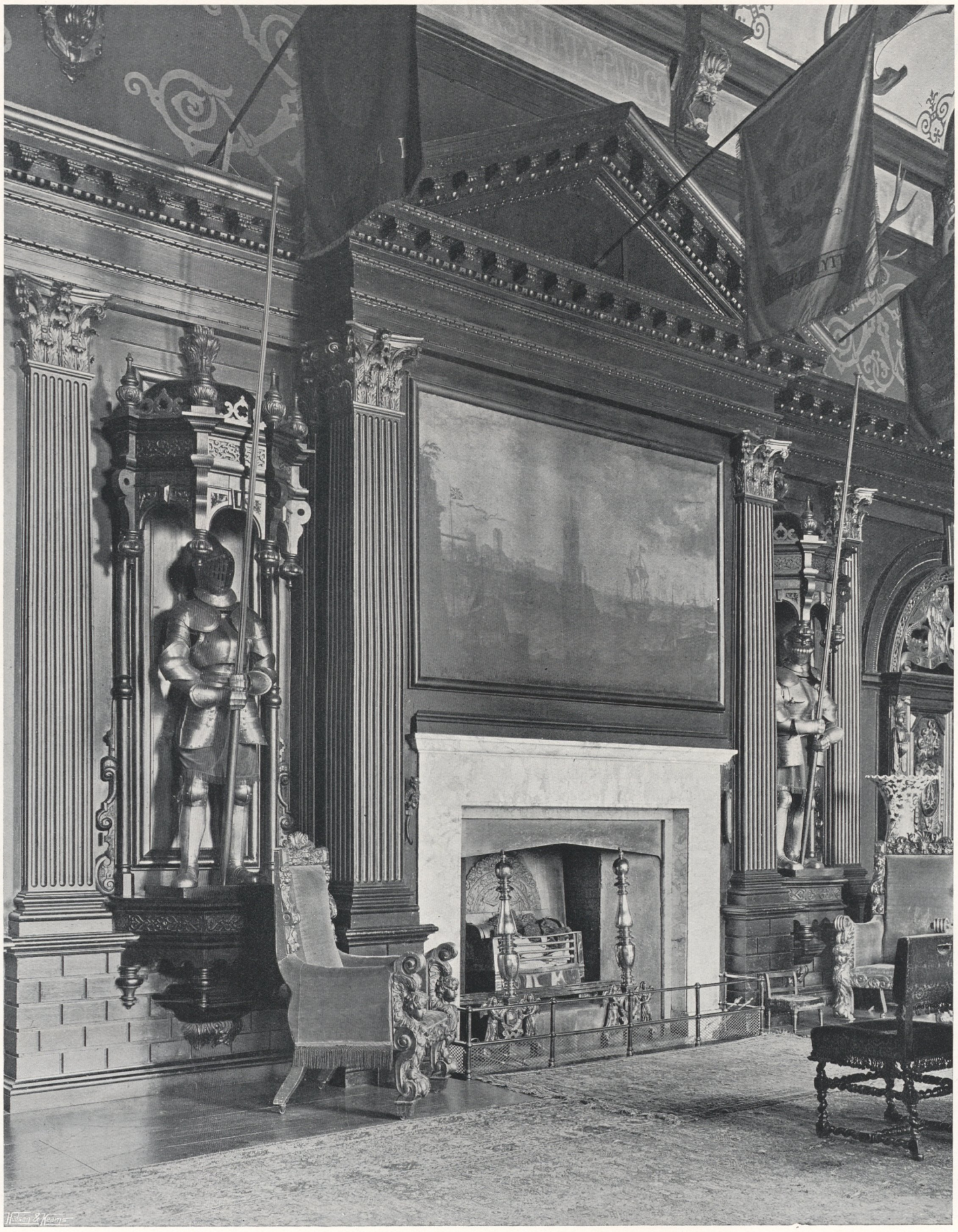
KNEBWORTH is mentioned in the Domesday Survey, under the title of Chenepeworde, as belonging to Eudo the Steward (Dapifer), to whom it had been granted at the Conquest by William I. It first came into the possession of the Lytton family in the time of King Henry VII., when Sir Robert de Lytton bought the property from Sir Thomas Bourchier. For many years it passed from father to son in direct succession; but in the reign of Queen Anne the male line of the family came to an end with Sir William Lytton, who died in 1705. Four descents in the female line eventually brought the property, through Strodes, Robinsons and Warburtons, to the Bulwers, but in each case the heir added to his father's name that of the original line, which has thus been preserved, and, in spite of many failures in the direct line of succession, Knebworth still remains the property of the Lyttons.

The family pride of Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (a weakness which he was not ashamed to acknowledge) has preserved in the decorations of the house, for which he is responsible, an ample record of the various branches of the family. Their coats of arms are blazoned forth on ceilings, walls and floors, stained-glass windows are inscribed with their names and mottoes, and round the top of the large dining-hall hang banners bearing the names of the kings whom they served, or the battle-fields on which they fought. This hall is a fine room, with a carved oak screen and raised music gallery. The chimney-piece and wainscot framing were added in the reign of Charles I.



WEST END OF SOUTH-WEST FRONT.

from a design by Inigo Jones. The figures to right and left of the fireplace are in armour of the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. respectively. From the centre of the music gallery hangs a large banner, which was presented to the late Earl of Lytton by Queen Victoria in commemoration of the Delhi Durbar of 1877, at which he proclaimed her Empress of India. Beyond the hall is the oak drawing-room, containing a number of family portraits and a cabinet with some interesting miniatures and historical curiosities. Among these are a silver cross given by Mary Queen of Scots on the scaffold to one of her ladies ; snuff-boxes which belonged to Pitt and Fox ; and a ruler which once was Lord Byron's. This is the room in which the leaders of the Long Parliament—Hampden, Eliot and Pym—were entertained by Sir William Lytton. A fine carved oak door leads into the library. Most of the books in this room belonged to Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and were collected by him during his lifetime. Two other libraries, belonging to an earlier date, had formerly existed at Knebworth, but have not



THE HALL: EMBLEMS OF WAR.



IN THE QUEEN'S BEDROOM.

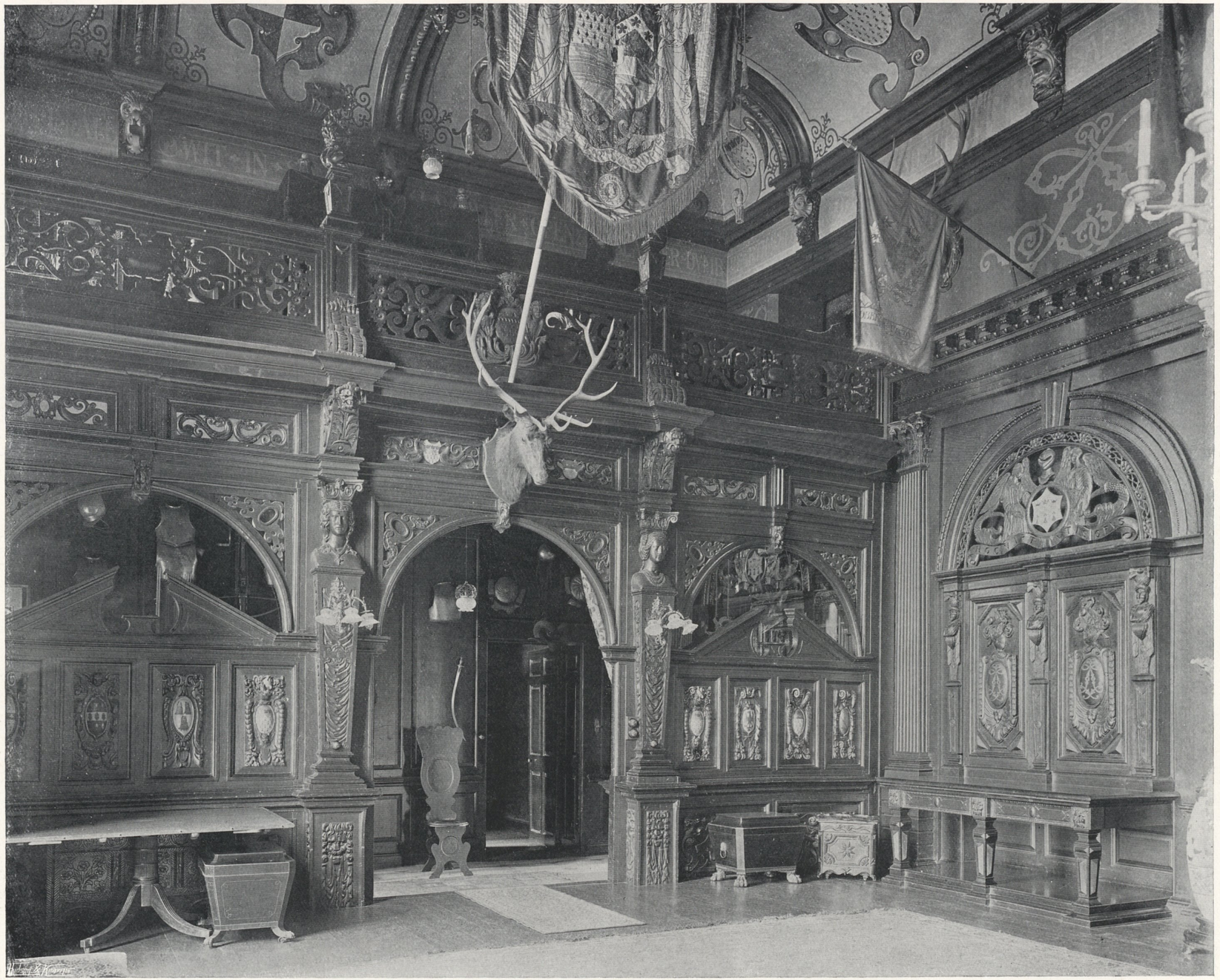
survived. The first had been bequeathed away from the family by the widow of the last Mr. Robinson-Lytton. The second had been collected by the eminent scholar Mr. Richard Warburton-Lytton, but was sold after his death to pay off his debts. Sir Edward has described in his autobiography the rapture with which, as a child, he pored over these books of his grandfather during the few months in which they lodged at his mother's house in London. "Many of these books," he said, "were in strange tongues which excited in me a deep and wistful reverence. They seemed filled with weird hieroglyphics and unearthly characters. But at length I fell upon others which I could understand: a race with which I had common speech. In the collection were numerous works upon knight-errantry, witchcraft and faery-land. Of these the one which specially caught my fancy was 'Amadis of Gaul,' in Southey's translation. There was much in it, no doubt, that I could not understand; but perhaps the very dimness of my comprehension increased the charm of it. Never can I forget the hours of rapt and intense enjoyment passed in

what then seemed to me the large London parlour, gloating over the wild feats and perilous adventures of this fabulous hero. That life in my grandfather's library was but as a vision of Khubla Khan—a glimpse of fountain and pillar, palm tree and purple, that came and went. But what came with it went not with it also away. That yearning of the soul for something beyond the range of the senses—that escape into the Immaterial which we call the Desire of Knowledge—books thus created in me : but it did not with me, as with my grandfather, seek nurture and refreshment from books alone. Circumstance, that leaves the master desire undiminished, modifies its form and varies its ends. To me knowledge has come somewhat from books, but far more from the hearts of men. To unravel motive, to analyse the passions and affections, searching out the hidden springs of human conduct, and the remote sources of human character ; these have been the aims which, pursued, it may be, with success or effort wholly vain, have at least rendered attractive to myself the paths of action as well as study, by connecting both study and action with an interest, a curiosity, an allurement, reaching far beyond the scope of either." In addition to the books in the present library there are others of considerable interest, especially those on magic and witchcraft, which were collected by Sir Edward towards the end of his life. These are to be found in the long picture gallery which faces the library on the other side of the main staircase. This gallery was originally the kitchen and offices of the old house. It contains some interesting pictures and furniture, also two bronze pillars with lamps which were dug up in a garden belonging to Joan Queen of Naples, and must be at least 2,000 years old. On the first floor, over the library and oak drawing-room, is a suite of three rooms, a large drawing-room and two small ante-rooms, which formed part of the long gallery hung with tapestry in the old house. The larger room contains some fine furniture, and on its walls hangs a portrait of Colonel Sir William Robinson Norreys, whose descendants afterwards took the name of Lytton, and became the owners of Knebworth. The following adventure is recorded of this gentleman, who, in the days of the Civil War, was a staunch Cavalier, and fought for King Charles at the time when the then head of the Lytton family was championing the cause of Parliament. In making his escape after the battle of Marston Moor, hotly pursued by the Roundheads, he arrived at his own home, upon which some workmen were employed in carrying out alterations. He had barely time to dismount from his horse, which was carried away and concealed, borrow the dress of one of his labourers, and set to work with the rest, when the Roundheads came up. The workmen, though pressed with threats and bribes for information of the fugitive, remained true to their master, who thus escaped the terrible penalty of being " hanged on the old oak before his own door."



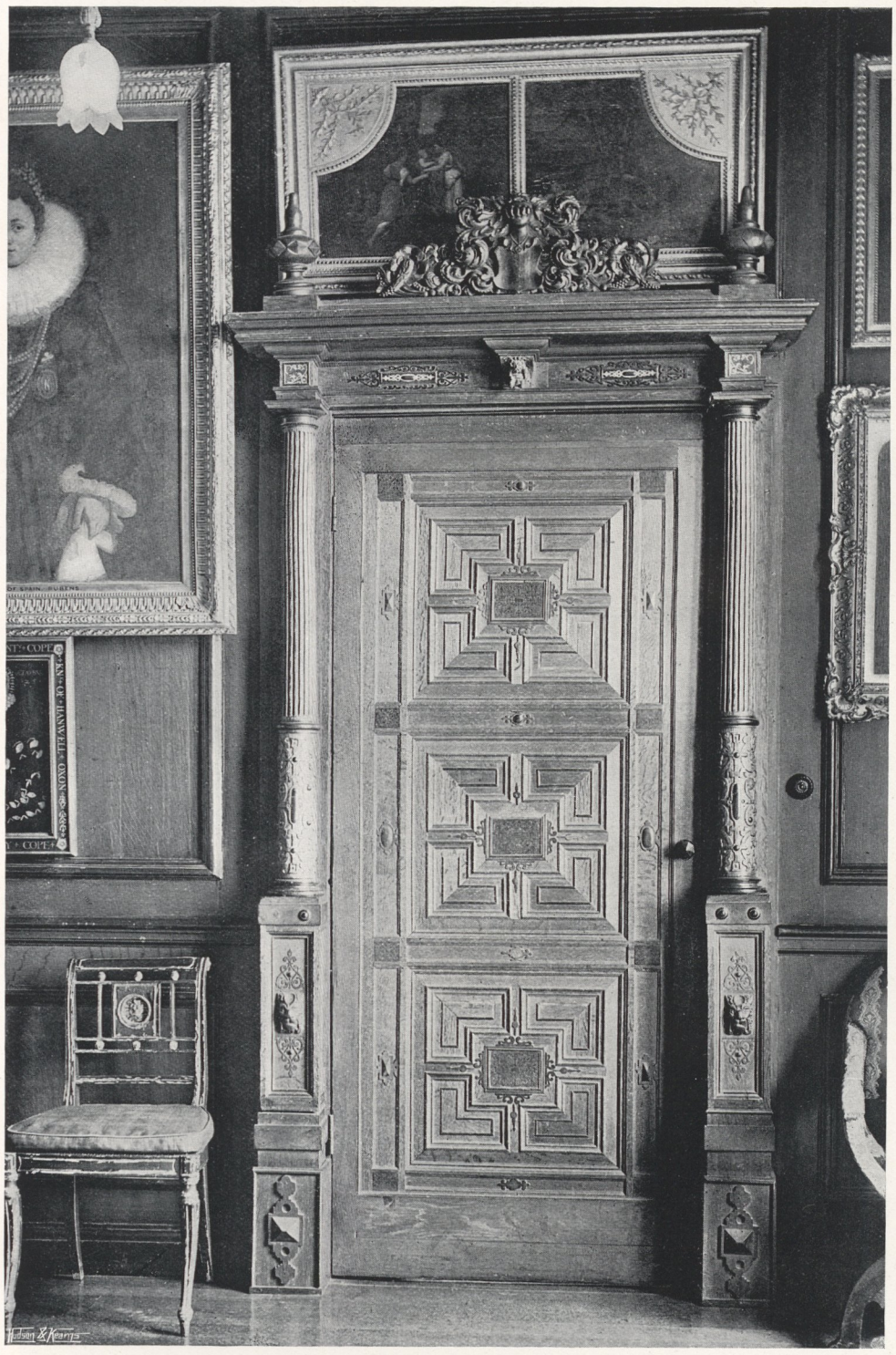
ANTE-ROOM OF THE GREAT DRAWING-ROOM.

On the landing outside this room is a picture of the Robinson Lyttons at a later date. Another anecdote is told of the persons seen in this picture,



THE HALL SCREEN.

which shows that the family still remained true to their political faith. When Charles Edward crossed the border, the William Robinson Lytton of the day determined to go to his support. After many vain expostulations, his wife (the lady in the centre of the picture) followed him to the stables, where his horse stood saddled for the journey ; and as soon as he had entered to see to his horse she turned the key upon him and kept him imprisoned for two days, until news came that



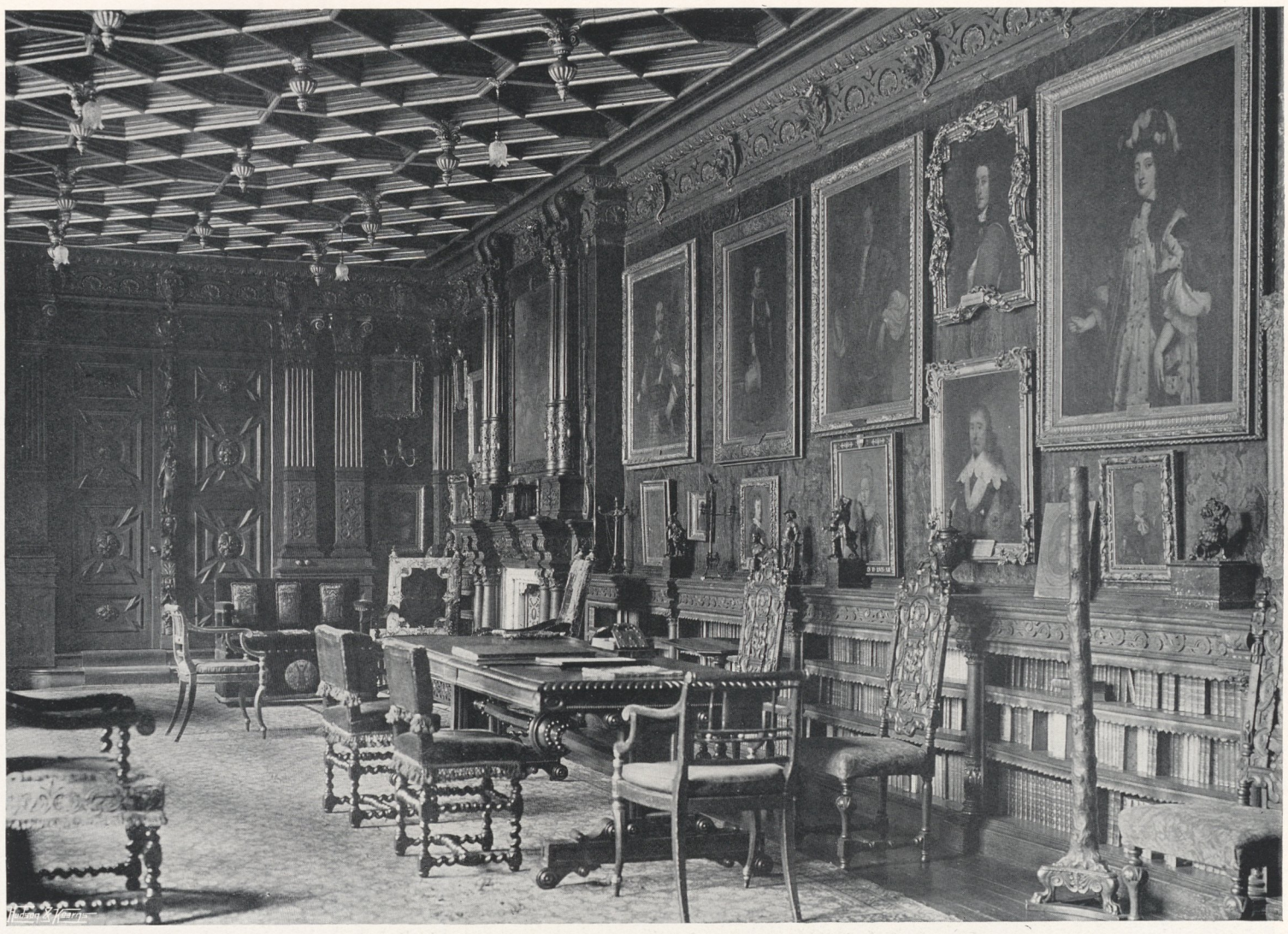
IN THE OAK DRAWING-ROOM.

the Stuart cause was lost and the Pretender had retreated. In one of the small ante-rooms is some very fine bead tapestry, said to have been brought from the palace of the Medici at Florence. A picture, painted by E. M. Ward, R.A., which now hangs upon the staircase, represents Sir Edward at work in this room, with one of the long cherry-tube pipes which he used to smoke. The staircase to the left leads to the Tudor corridor, with a suite of bedrooms. The most interesting of these is the room in which Queen Elizabeth is said to have slept in the year of the Spanish Armada. The bedstead and general character of the room are Elizabethan, but only a small portion of the tapestry near the bed has survived from that period. The rest is more recent, and comes from Beauvais. Opposite this room is one which is dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Bulwer, the masterful old lady who imposed her will upon the whole parish for many years, and who destroyed the greater part of the home of her ancestors in 1812, on the ground that it was too large and expensive for her means. The remainder was afterwards refaced and altered by Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and essentially represents his character and his aspirations. A story is still told in the village of Mrs. Bulwer's quarrel with the parson ; how she vowed that she would never enter his church until she was carried there feet foremost ; how she not only kept that promise herself, but forbade every other inhabitant of the village to set foot inside the church on pain of incurring her displeasure ; how having planted trees round it to hide it from her view, she herself conducted the service regularly every Sunday in her own drawing-room to a large congregation, while the parson and the parish clerk were left to say their prayers to each other ; and how, finally, the interdict was only removed by her death, when her coffin was carried by her tenants feet foremost through the western door and up the aisle of the church which she had refused to enter alive. Even so, her bones were not allowed to rest there, but were placed in a family mausoleum which she had erected in the park during her lifetime. It is also recorded that in her younger days she used to drive through the village with her mother, while the latter threw sweetmeats to the children to make them cheer her, so much did she love the sound of their voices. The mantel-piece of the room in which Mrs. Bulwer lived and died now bears an inscription placed there by her son, which charges posterity to preserve it for ever in all its essential features exactly as she left it. The room contains several portraits of her family, including those of her son, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, as a child, and her two grandchildren, Edward Robert (afterwards first Earl of Lytton) and his sister Emily.

Every house which has stood for many generations becomes at last a monument of the family which has owned it, and with the changing fortunes and personal history of that



IN THE OAK DRAWING-ROOM.



HISTORICAL PICTURES: SALOON.



ANTE-ROOM OF SALOON.



QUEEN ELIZABETH'S ROOM.

family much of its interest is inseparably bound up. In the case of Knebworth these personal associations belong chiefly to comparatively recent years. By the destruction of three parts of it, and the complete alteration of the fourth, the chain of events which connected the house with its owners was rudely broken. There is little about the place to-day which recalls the early Lytton ancestors, or the later Robinsons, or even the old scholar Richard Warburton ; but every feature of the present building is expressive of the last two generations who lived in it. Just as Abbotsford, with all its architectural faults, is still visited with a kind of reverence by the admirers of Sir Walter Scott, so will Knebworth always possess a special interest, and even a special charm, for those who have found pleasure in the novels of Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, or the poetry of Owen Meredith.



THE GATEHOUSE.