

Reviews and Notices of New Books.

Under this heading, it is proposed to call attention to a selection from current literature relating to the archaeology or natural history of our county. Communications should be addressed to the Hon. Editor.

Early Renaissance Architecture in Derbyshire.*

By the REV. J. CHARLES COX, LL.D., F.S.A.



R. GOTCH, who has long ago proved himself to be a master on the subject of the architecture of the Renaissance in England, has recently produced an admirable historical and descriptive account of the Tudor, Elizabethan, and Jacobean periods, in a volume that is generously illustrated with aptly chosen examples. Text books have been almost unduly multiplied with regard to the development and evolution of English architecture down to the close of the fifteenth century. Many a fairly well-read Englishman has more or less correct notions of the successive periods of Gothic architecture, particularly as displayed in what the "restorers" have left us of our parochial churches; but from Tudor times downwards there is for the most part considerable ignorance. The time for sneering at everything that was not Gothic has happily gone by, and Mr. Gotch has opportunely stepped in at the beginning of a new century

* *Early Renaissance Architecture in England.* By J. A. Gotch, F.S.A. Price, 2s. net. B. T. Batsford, High Holborn.

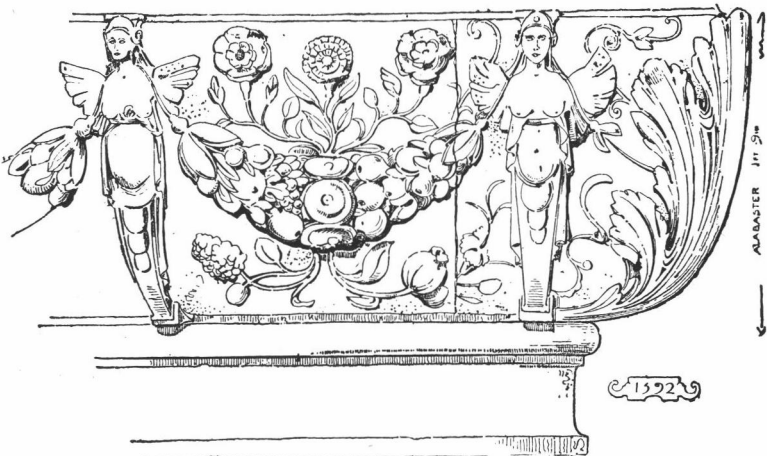
We are much indebted to Mr. Batsford for the loan of the blocks that illustrate this notice.

with a work that is of artistic and technical value, and at the same time popularly written, to supply information as to the architecture of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The intention of this short notice, in addition to drawing general attention to a noteworthy book, is to point out to Derbyshire folk the interest that attaches to their own county in the buildings of this period. Mr. Gotch has found far more material to illustrate his work in this county than in any other English shire of a like size. This must not be looked for in the church fabrics. The English Reformation unhappily imbibed not a few of the extravagant notions of certain continental enthusiasts—those “poor withered souls,” as Sir W. B. Richmond recently termed them at the Nottingham Church Congress—who were convinced that the worship of the Great Designer of the Universe ought to be divorced from everything connected with skilful handicraft or beauty of design. The movement in England, associated as it was with the spoliations of Henry VIII., and more particularly of Edward VI., not only put a rude check on church building or extension that lasted for some three centuries, but also worked the destruction (outside the religious houses) of a vast number of interesting ecclesiastical buildings. In Derbyshire alone, as has been pointed out,* upwards of one hundred churches or chapels fell into desuetude and consequent ruin during the reign of Elizabeth. Mr. Gotch boldly asserts that there is no ecclesiastical architecture of early Renaissance character in England. This is undoubtedly the fact, for when we think of the instances of pre-reformation churches of the first thirty years of the sixteenth century, they are all entirely Gothic in treatment. Moreover the two or three isolated examples of church building or church extension of the Stuart days are all of a debased imitative Gothic style. The only instance that we know of genuine Renaissance stone work in connection with an English church during the whole of the long reign of Elizabeth was at Holdenby, Northamptonshire, where Sir Christopher Hatton employed John Thorpe to build the vast and magnificent Holdenby

* *Notes on Churches of Derbyshire*, vol. iv, 537-8.

House, *circa* 1580-5. The workmen not only beautified the interior of the adjacent church with a classical screen, and adorned the walls with richly bordered texts, but they built a new and handsome south doorway after a fashion exactly harmonising with the House. This rare if not unique church embellishment of Elizabethan days was ruthlessly swept away in the "seventies," by Sir Gilbert Scott, to give place to an ordinary doorway and porch of Gothic imitation, in order that the whole church might "harmonise"!



Frieze of the Foljambe Tomb (1592). Chesterfield Church.

The influence, then, of the new classic style had no opportunity for many a long year of shewing itself in English church building for the simple reason that Englishmen had ceased to build to the honour and glory of God. Folk had, however, still to be buried, and the great ones had not lost their desire to be specially commemorated, if not by prayers, at least by costly tombs within consecrated walls. The new style, introduced with consummate and costly skill on the monument of Henry VII., began gradually to make its way throughout England in the memorials of the wealthy dead. In more remote districts, such as Derbyshire, the old idea of the table

tomb, with recumbent effigies and hands piously folded in prayer, lingered on till towards the close of the sixteenth century. The Bradbourne tomb, of 1581, in Ashbourne church, of which Mr. Gotch gives an illustration and description, is a late example of this survival. The Foljambe tombs, however, in Chesterfield church, show marked originality of treatment. One of them, dated 1592, in the form of a sarcophagus, shows much beauty and grace of pure classical design, as is shewn by a drawing of a portion of the alabaster frieze. (See illustration, p. 155).

Illustrations are also given of the Cokayne tombs, Ashbourne, and of the tomb of Sir George Vernon, Bakewell.

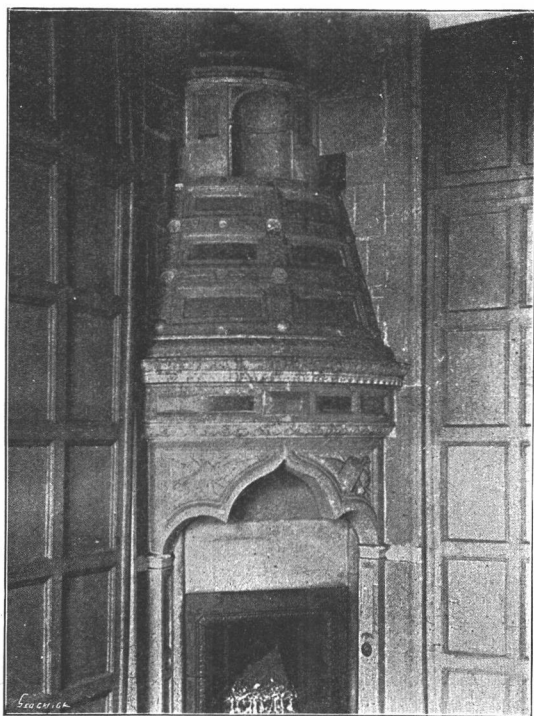
The fittings and furniture of churches, which often required renewal, gave scope for the development of the new style. This was particularly the case with pulpits. Many handsome pulpits date from 1603, when the canons ordered a pulpit to be placed in every church which was not already provided with one. Derbyshire has but few examples of church wood-work of Mr. Gotch's period, the Elizabethan Holy Table of Bread-sall church being the most noteworthy. This escaped, however, the writer's attention, but the well-designed and rather exceptional pulpit of Chesterfield church is described and illustrated. It almost borders on the impertinent to differ with the writer on questions of probable dates, but from the nature of the ornament of this pulpit we are inclined to think that it is most likely of Restoration (1660) date, and therefore just outside the limit of this book. The illustrations of this volume are for the most part excellent, especially those which are reproductions from Mr. Gotch's camera. But the picture of Chesterfield pulpit is disappointing. The fine design of this good piece of woodwork is spoilt by its adjuncts. Perhaps Mr. Gotch lacked the courage to ask for the temporary removal of the obtrusive brass sermon rest of church furnishers' design, or the unhangings of the still more obtrusive hymn notice board on the wall behind!

Although the providing of buildings for religious purposes came to an almost complete standstill during the long reign of Elizabeth, there was an extraordinary development of domestic architecture not only on a noble scale, where the new style often had full sway, but also in buildings of lesser dimensions, and in the smaller manor houses, where the old native traditions were slower in yielding to the foreign ideas. Derbyshire has no magnificent examples such as are to be found at Burleigh and Kirby in Northamptonshire, though Bess of Hardwick left behind her a sufficiently pretentious and effective effort, where both comfort and grace were sacrificed to the overweening desire for abundance of glass, wherein it had been her intention to have a magnificent display of heraldic ornament. Its appearance is well summed up in the old jingle that says:—"Hardwick Hall, more glass than wall!" Mr. Gotch dealt generously with Hardwick in his former great portfolio work; and in these pages will be found a plate of the presence chamber with its remarkable plaster frieze between six and seven feet deep, ornamented with figure subjects in relief, and another plate of the marble panel over one of the bedroom chimney-pieces richly carved with an allegorical design.

Haddon Hall, the most interesting piece of domestic work in all England, whose every style from early Norman to later Renaissance is blended in the one diversified but most harmonious building, has, if possible, been too much illustrated; until certain parts, such as the doorway of Dorothy's fabled exit, have become almost hackneyed. But no one of taste can regret that Mr. Gotch's cultured eye was caught by such details as a door-latch, a window fastener, a leaden rain-head spout, a corner of the great hall, the wooden fittings of the chapel, or a beautiful pattern on a ceiling in the gatehouse.

Far less known than Haddon or Hardwick, are Bolsover Castle, and Barlborough Hall. At Bolsover, a square house was built in 1613, on the site of the ancient Norman keep. A ground plan is given of this symmetrical house with its forecourt and lodges, as well as a photographic plate of the

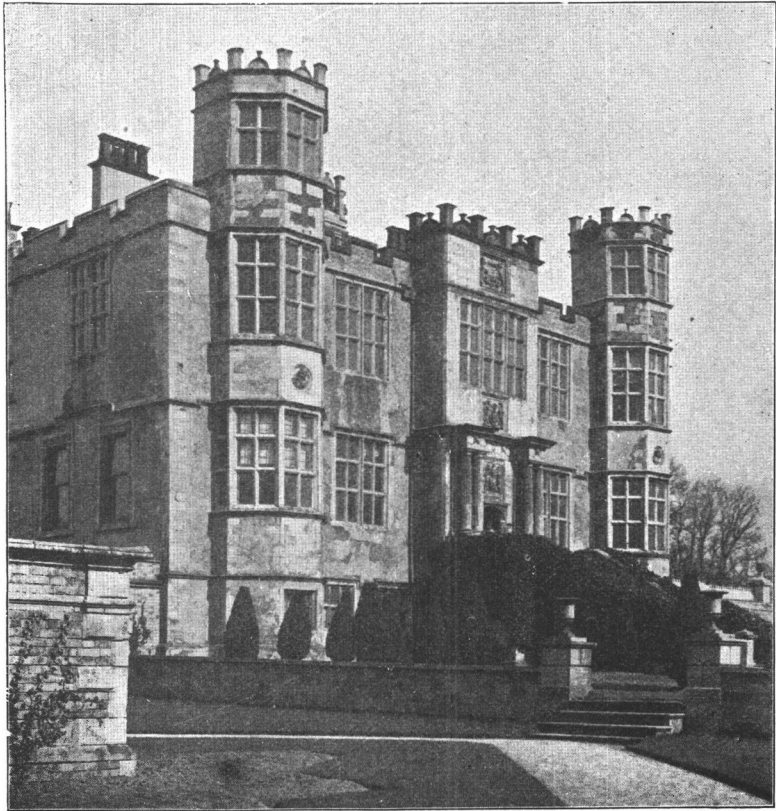
somewhat plain entrance front. "The house itself is full of
 "interest; all the rooms on the basement and principal floor
 "are vaulted, and the vaulting ribs and corbels are managed
 "with such care as was seldom bestowed upon those features
 "even in the days of stone vaulting. This method of con-
 "struction was rapidly going out of fashion, most of the houses
 "of the sixteenth century having floors of joists and boards,



Stone Corner Chimney-piece, Bolsover.

"the underside being ceiled in the early part of the century
 "with wood, and in the latter part with plaster. But at
 "Bolsover, as late as 1613, we have stone vaulting beautifully
 "wrought. There is a large amount of good panelling also
 "left, and the chimney-pieces are unrivalled in any house of
 "the time for their beauty and variety."

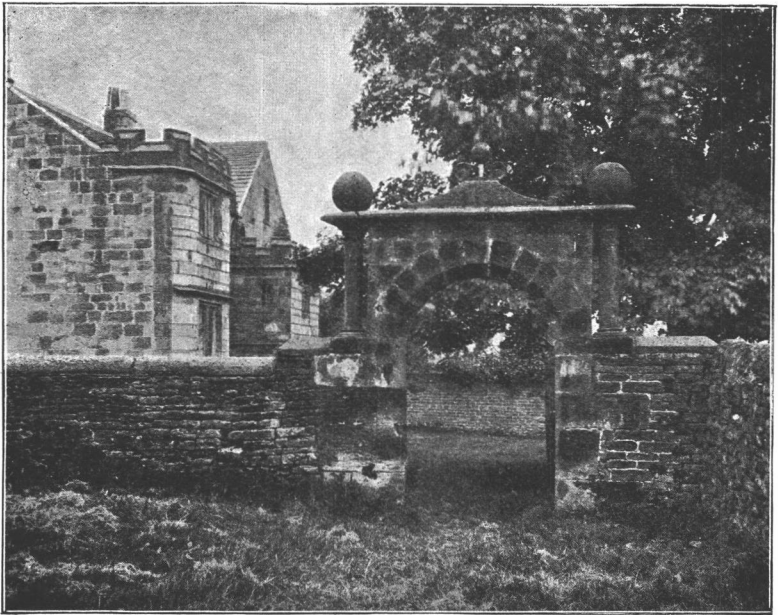
Barlborough Hall, 1583, is a house of unusual plan among Elizabethan builders. The ground plan shows that it was built round an extremely small central court (now filled with a modern staircase) after a fashion common enough in sunny



Barlborough House.

Italy, but ill-suited for our duller weather. The hall is on the principal floor and is approached from outside up a long flight of steps. The actual classic treatment is confined to the entrance, which is flanked with columns, and to the intervening

details of the battlements of the turrets. With respect to the interesting front of this house, Mr. Gotch well remarks that—"picturesqueness of outline, which was always sought for, is here obtained by carrying up the bay windows as turrets, a treatment which lends much distinction to an otherwise simple exterior." There is an excellent plate of the remarkably fine chimney-piece in Barlborough Hall, the upper part of which records the personal history of the original



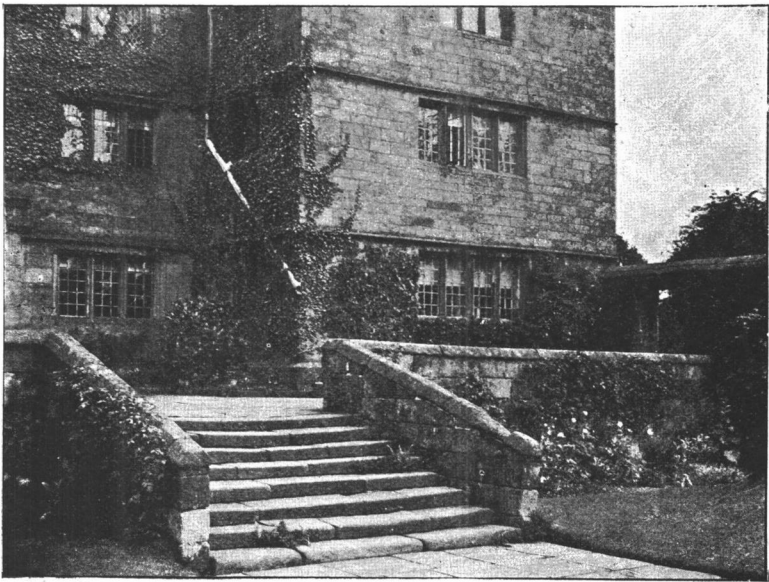
Gateway of the Old Hall, Highlow, near Hathersage.

owner, Francis Rodes, Justice of the Common Pleas, married twice as there narrated. His own arms and those of his two wives are set forth with emphasis. The upper cornice is supported by two caryatides, one of whom represents justice, in allusion to the owner's calling.

Derbyshire has also a variety of smaller halls or manor houses than that of Barlborough, particularly in the north of the county, invisible to the speeding cyclist and known only

to the patient Rambler. Two of these have been noted and described by Mr. Gotch, and well illustrated with his camera.

The gateway of Highlow Hall, near Hathersage, one of the seats of the many-branched Eyre family, is a characteristic example; whilst the modest steps that lead from a square forecourt to the wide-paved terrace that extends along the whole front of Eyam Hall have a charm and quiet dignity that had hitherto been unobserved.



Terrace Steps of the Old Hall at Eyam.

It is understood that Mr. Gotch not long since made a summer sojourn in the north of the county. Derbyshire men, we feel sure, would rejoice to hear of another visit, and he has probably learnt enough already of the county, to know that there is yet much of interest in the shire of his own special period, impatiently waiting for notice from his pencil, pen, or camera.

It is much to be hoped that ere long Mr. Gotch will be induced to bring out a companion volume to the one now under notice, extending from the Restoration to the end of the Georges. Such a descriptive handbook is at present entirely lacking. If undertaken in the power and spirit that animates these pages, the period would prove to be far more picturesque and interesting than is usually or fashionably supposed to be the case, and Derbyshire would again be well to the fore in variety of examples. The shelters that man has occupied, or has contrived for his convenience and delight can never lack in interest to the intelligent, from the caves of our palæolithic ancestors to the villas of modern suburban life.