WOLLATON AND HARDWICK HALLS.

By J. A. GOTCH, F.S.A.

Wollaton Hall.[1]

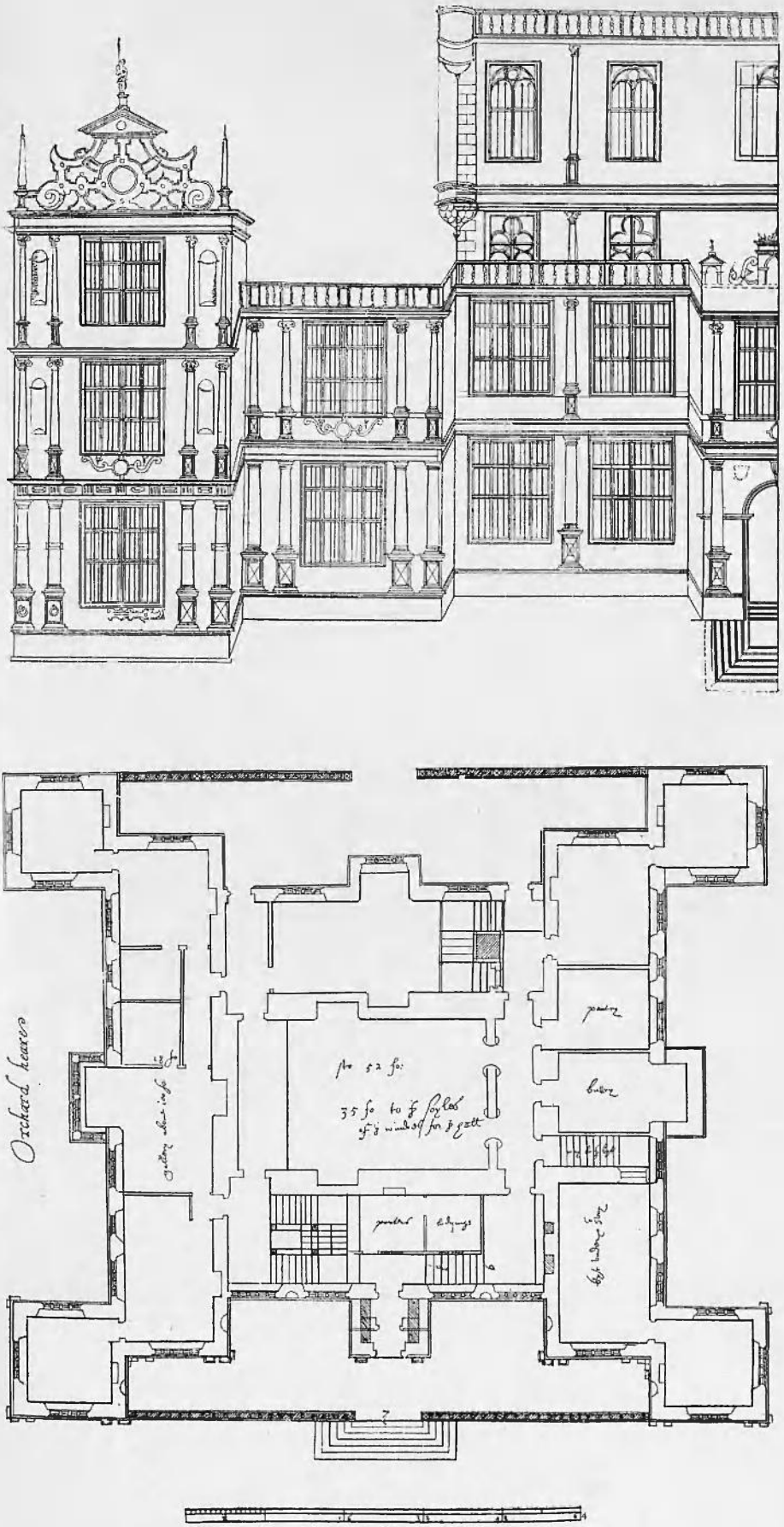
Wollaton Hall is sometimes quoted as a typical example of the work of the English Renaissance. Those who are in sympathy with that phase of domestic architecture point to it as a magnificent specimen of an Elizabethan palace. Those who are out of sympathy direct the finger of scorn to its extravagances and its pretentiousness. As a matter of fact it cannot be called a typical example. In its chief characteristics it stands by itself, namely, in its lofty central hall and its four corner pavilions. In its extreme regularity of treatment, and in the great care bestowed upon its detail, it exhibits far more of conscious effort in design than the majority of houses built at that period.

The interesting question is, Who was responsible for the design of Wollaton? So little is really known from actual records of the architectural designers of that period, or of their method of work, that the field of conjecture is a vast one, and offers scope for manœuvres on a large scale. But there are one or two facts connected with this house which help us to a certain extent. We know from the inscription over the garden door that it was built by Sir Francis Willoughby, constructed with uncommon art and left as a precious possession to the Willoughbys. It was begun in 1580 and finished in 1588. We also know that in John Thorpe's collection of drawings in the Soane Museum there is a ground plan of the house and half the front elevation. We also find in Wollaton Church a monument to "Mr. Robert Smythson, gent. architector and surveyor unto the most worthy house of Wollaton and diverse others of great

[1] Read at Wollaton, July 25th, 1901.

account," who died in 1614 at the age of seventy-nine. Lastly, we learn from Cassandra Willoughby, Duchess of Chandos, who wrote an account of the house in 1702, that Sir Francis Willoughby sent for the master-workmen who built the house out of Italy, and also for most of the stone figures which adorn it.

Here, then, we have apparently a number of conflicting claims. No one, however, contests with Sir Francis Willoughby the honour of having built the house in the sense of having ordered and paid for it. Nor is its date in question. But there are three claimants to the honour of having designed it, namely, John Thorpe, Robert Smythson, and the master-workmen out of Italy. First, as to the latter. The idea has long been very prevalent that the houses of Elizabeth's time owed their special characteristics to Italy and to Italian workmen; and so, in a way, they did, because Italy influenced more or less directly the work of the Renaissance in all other countries. But, as a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult to trace anything but a very small amount of English work to actual Italian hands. The whole tendency of recent inquiries goes to show that it was English hands which executed most of the work which has an Italian appearance. The tales of models having been sent for from Italy for English houses are, I think, apocryphal, because the plan of an English house differed widely from that of an Italian; and although I am not prepared to say that Cassandra the Duchess was wrong, still the master-workmen who were sent for out of Italy could have had very little to do with the designing of Wollaton. The chief credit for that performance I am inclined to give to John Thorpe, and I reconcile his claims and those of Robert Smythson by regarding the latter as the chief workman and clerk of the works or surveyor. It must be remembered that although the same terms are used now as were used then, the meaning of them has changed. We find a number of men described as "architectus" or "architector," who were what we should regard as master-masons, and that is what I think Mr. Robert Smythson was. But it must also be remembered that the relation of the master-mason to the architect was then very different from what it is to-day. The architect



PLAN AND HALF FRONT ELEVATION OF WOLLATON HALL, BY JOHN THORPE.
The elevation is drawn to double the scale of the plan.

to-day designs everything himself; in those days he seems only to have given a general idea of what he wanted, leaving the detail to be developed by the master-mason. The latter might therefore well take credit to himself—or his sorrowing family for him—as being the "architector" to a house like Wollaton.

The actual origin of the idea of the house I attribute to Thorpe. He claims nothing for himself; he only leaves certain drawings behind him (Plate II).

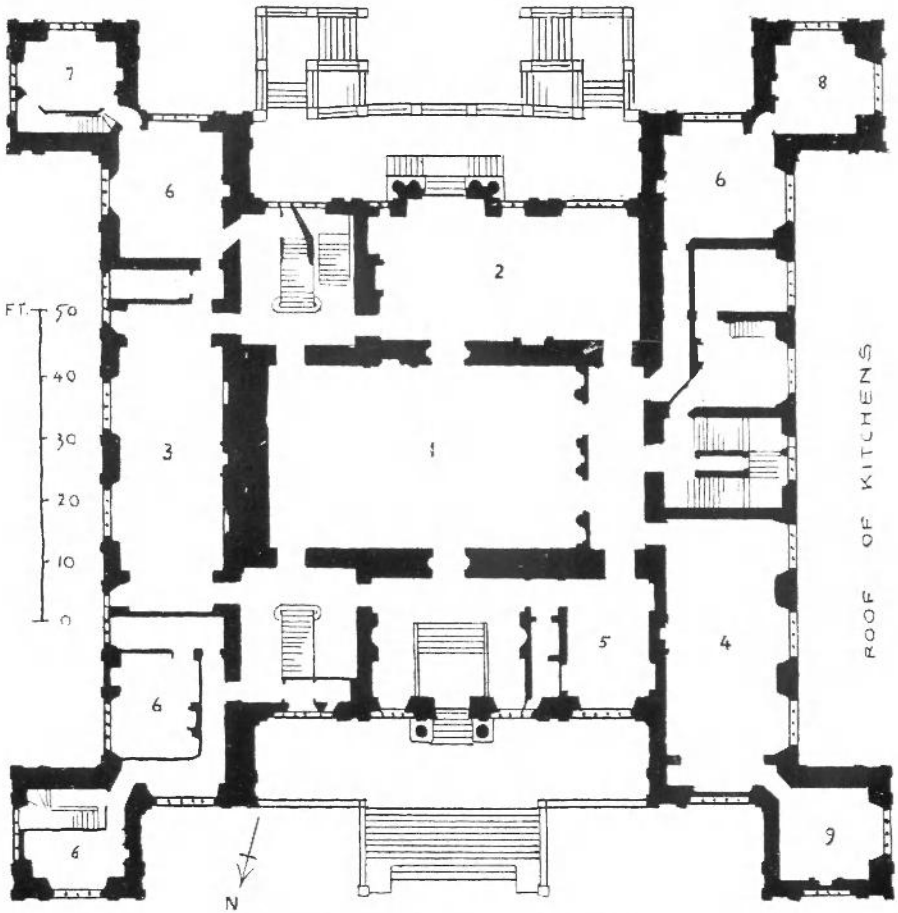
In comparing Thorpe's plan with the actual ground plan (Plate III), it will be found that the main dimensions tally almost exactly; the corner pavilions, however, are not quite so large as he shows them, and the projection of the wings beyond the entrance and garden fronts is rather larger than he indicates. The hall is built to his dimensions of 60 feet by 30 feet. As to the general similarity of the two plans, the likeness is obvious, but the difference in the thickness of the various main walls should be observed. The variations in the positions of the internal cross walls need hardly be considered, because they result in all probability from comparatively recent alterations. But in the main skeleton there are several noteworthy discrepancies. The corner pavilions in Thorpe's plan do not overlap the north and south fronts, whereas they do in the building itself. The entrance porch as built is quite different from what he shows, and so is the projecting window in the centre of the south or garden front. The two central bays which he shows on the east and west fronts do not appear in the building itself: as a matter of fact the east front has six large windows between the pavilions, whereas the west has seven. Thorpe shows both these fronts treated alike.

Comparing Thorpe's half-elevation with the photograph of the building (Plate I), the general likeness again is obvious. But Thorpe shows no basement windows; his front porch agrees with his plan and differs from the actual work; he shows two four-light windows in the front at the side of the porch, whereas there are actually a four-light and a five-light; he shows a single pilaster between these windows, whereas there are two. The end of his wing has a four-light window; the

building itself has a five-light. Niches which he does not show have been made on the main front as well as on the flanks of the various projections. He shows several ways of ornamenting the pedestals of his pilasters; in execution they have the gondola rings shown to the left of his ground story. The curly gable of his corner pavilion, although carefully shown, does not quite tally with the gable as carried out; nor does his angle turret on the central tower agree with what was built. He evidently started by treating the angle with quoins surmounted by a small turret at the top, but he subsequently lengthened the turret downwards. The pilasters which he shows on this central block do not appear in the building: if they had they would have served to bring that part of the composition more into harmony with the lower part and nothing would probably have been heard of the suggestion that the central pavilion is part of an older building. A study of the plan and of the building, however, disposes of this suggestion, nor could the lofty hall and the room over it be harmonized with any known treatment of houses prior to the Elizabethan era.

The discrepancies here pointed out do away with the idea that Thorpe's drawings were made from the building after erection. They are easily accounted for on the supposition that the drawings were modified in the course of being carried out.

There is one point in connection with these drawings which bears forcibly upon the question with which we are now dealing, namely, the source whence the ideas which underlay our English Renaissance came. There was a tolerably widespread desire in Elizabeth's time to benefit by what was being done in foreign lands. A young architect, John Shute, was sent by the Duke of Northumberland to study architecture in Italy. Lord Burghley made more than one inquiry for books on architecture recently published in France, and John Thorpe himself, as his drawings show, studied Italian, French, and Dutch books. One of the French books to which he devoted considerable attention was Androuet du Cerceau's *Les plus Excellents Bastiments de France*, published in 1576, and in that book are



WOLLATON HALL. GROUND PLAN, 1901.

a few plans with corner pavilions such as these at Wollaton. The disposition of Wollaton is so unusual that it is quite possible that Thorpe may have put into practice here some of the ideas he gleaned from Du Cerceau's book. Some of Du Cerceau's plans he copied into his own MS. book, but in doing so he adapted them to English uses, and it was much the same with Wollaton. The plan is not a direct copy; it is only the general idea which, if I am right, was derived from the French source. Thorpe, having designed the plan and elevation, may be presumed to have handed them over to Robert Smythson, who, with the help of the master-workmen from Italy, carried the work out. Such a course of procedure would at any rate reconcile the claims of the various parties.

But leaving the question of who designed the house, a few words must be bestowed upon the structure itself. Its plan, although of foreign origin, was so contrived as to comply with old-established English habits. The central position of the hall rendered it not altogether easy of access in the usual way—that is, into the passage at the end called the "screens." The most direct way from the front door to the hall is that which now exists, but this leads you into the middle of the side, not into the screens. Thorpe, therefore (for I will assume that Thorpe was the designer), kept his hall floor above the level of his front door, and led the visitor, not directly into the hall, but round to the right, and so, by way of a flight of steps, up to the end of the hall and delivered him into the screens in the usual way. The spare space not occupied by the stairs he devoted to the porter's rooms. A further reason for keeping the hall floor raised was that, contrary to the prevailing custom, he put his kitchen and servants' rooms down in a basement. This was almost a necessity of the design, for being of a pretentious nature, it was obliged to be grand on every side, and the kitchen and inferior premises had to be hidden away in a basement in order not to spoil the symmetry of the four show-sides of the house.

The disposition of the house, with a central hall surrounded by rooms two stories high. necessitated an unusual height for the hall, which is over 50 feet high.

Its window-sills also had to be above the roofs of the surrounding rooms, and they are some 35 feet from floor. The upper floor of these adjacent rooms on the east side was devoted to the long gallery, but modern alterations, necessitated by constant use, have not only divided this up into a number of small rooms, but have effectually obliterated from the interior of the whole house all its Elizabethan character, except what remains in the basement and in the great hall. The fine stone screen remains here, and also the original roof, which is an excellent specimen of Elizabethan work. It has this peculiarity, that though fashioned like an open hammer-beam roof, it supports in reality the floor of a large room over, called the Prospect-Room, which occupies the upper part of the central block that forms so conspicuous a feature of the house.

It only remains to say that the house was entirely new from its foundations and that it occupied eight years in erection: there was apparently no building here before it, although very frequently we find Elizabethan houses enveloping remains of a humbler predecessor. The Willoughbys had lived at Wollaton for some generations previous to the building of the mansion, but their home was a house somewhere near the church. It has been suggested that the central block is earlier in date than that which surrounds it; but reflection shows that the hall must necessarily have been built in relation to the lower buildings round it, there is nothing to indicate any alterations of an older building, the detail of the central block, although different, is contemporary with that of the rest of the house, and the whole of it is shown on Thorpe's drawing. Everything, therefore, tends to prove that the whole house was built at the same time. Duchess Cassandra tells us that the stone was brought from Ancaster, and that the same pack-horses which brought it took back Sir Francis's coal in exchange. Notwithstanding that he got his stone for nothing, she says, and that labour was much cheaper in those days, the house cost Sir Francis £80,000.

The external treatment is of pronounced classic character, with plenty of pilasters and bold cornices. There are a number of circular niches containing busts

of classic personages such as Virgil, Plato, Aristotle, and Diana. The master-workmen out of Italy were presumably familiar with these celebrities, and so might have been Mr. Robert Smythson, gent., but the ordinary English workman must have been rather puzzled by them, and perhaps secretly relieved when he heard that a shipload of them had gone down, an accident that is said to account for some of the niches being empty. But, *pace* Duchess Cassandra, a good deal more assistance in English houses came from the Dutch than the Italians in the time of Elizabeth, and it would not be surprising if the building accounts, which are some day to be published, showed that Holland rather than Italy was the source whence some of the lower work was derived (in spite of the gondola rings which adorn the bases of some of the pilasters), as it certainly was the place where the curly gables of the pavilions had their origin.

Hardwick Hall.[1]

Hardwick Hall is a building of considerable interest to the student of English domestic architecture, inasmuch as it is a good example of one manner of the Elizabethan designers, and it has undergone no very serious alterations since it was built. It has suffered, like most houses of that time, from age and from the changing fashions of its inhabitants; but such changes as it has experienced have been in comparatively small matters, so that in the general disposition of its plan and in its external appearance it remains to-day very much the same as when the eye of its founder, Bess of Hardwick, last fell upon it. This Bess of Hardwick was a notable personage, a woman of great ability and strong will, and being possessed of considerable wealth, she left her mark upon the times in the shape of several large houses, of which this is one, and the only one surviving the others being Chatsworth—which has been rebuilt—

[1] Read at Hardwick, July 26th. 1901.

and Oldcotes. She was the daughter of John Hardwick of Hardwick, and was born in the old hall, the ruins of which still remain in front of the present house, near the brow of the hill. That she was a woman of great ability and personal attractions is sufficiently proved by the fact that she married four husbands and survived the last. Her first husband was Robert Barley of Barley. Her second was Sir William Cavendish of Chatsworth, ancestor of the present Duke of Devonshire, the owner of Hardwick. The third was Sir William St. Loe, and her fourth was George, Earl of Shrewsbury. It was after her marriage to the last-named that she built Hardwick Hall, since her initials, E.S., and a coronet form a conspicuous part of the ornamental balustrade on the towers. The date usually assigned to the house is 1576. There is a chimney-piece in one of the bedrooms dated 1588, another in the dining-room dated 1597, and the door of the room called after Mary Queen of Scots is dated 1599.

The new hall and the old hall stood side by side, and both were in use for many years. The old hall is, indeed, not much older than the new. Much of it has disappeared, but judging by what remains, its general disposition was symmetrical; its windows, as can be seen, are mullioned and have rectangular lights; its whole appearance points to a date about the middle of the sixteenth century. Tradition gives this house as the birthplace of Bess in 1520, and perhaps a careful search might reveal indications of a building of that date. But if anything of it still survives, it certainly would seem as though the old house had been modernized during the second half of the sixteenth century, an additional proof being the remains of a plaster frieze with figures modelled in relief, of the same character as the frieze in the presence-chamber of the new house. Having been thus brought up to date, the old house was not left to immediate decay in consequence of the erection of its rival, for we learn from the ingenious Mr. Collins, who quotes Bishop Kennet's *Memoirs of the Cavendish Family*, in his account of the Dukes of Devonshire given in his *Peerage*, that one room was of such exact proportions and such convenient lights that

it had been thought fit for a pattern for a room in Blenheim House. It would be, therefore, well into the eighteenth century before the old house fell to ruin.

It is not unlikely that the older house was the more comfortable of the two; for Hardwick Hall can hardly be considered as a model of convenient planning. It belongs to that species of house of which a large number were built in Elizabeth's days—a house designed as an exercise in symmetry rather than as a dwelling. True, it contains the apartments which were then considered essential, but they are arranged with less than the usual care to secure comfort and convenience. What must strike everyone who first sees Hardwick is the great size and number of the windows. This has given rise to the well-known jingle, "Hardwick Hall, more glass than wall." It is a fault common to many of the houses of the time and one which Lord Bacon protested against in his oft-quoted complaint that "you shall sometimes have fair houses so full of glass that one cannot tell where to become to be out of the sun or cold." The fact that windows were so large and plentiful is one of considerable interest and significance, for it emphasizes the complete change which had come over house-planning in the space of a few years. Thirty or forty years earlier windows were somewhat jealously introduced, especially on outer walls, for the necessity for defensive precautions had then hardly ceased. Here, at Hardwick, however, no thought of defence is apparent; everything is done to procure the largest amount of light and air. The windows, in fact, are overdone; they make the circuit of the walls with relentless symmetry, and not a few of them have been blocked up inside, in order to render the rooms habitable. Some of them were shams from the outset, and have fireplaces against them, whilst others are crossed by floors, so that the lower lights belong to one story and the upper to another. That is what comes from trying to carry out a preconceived idea—namely, that of absolute symmetry—instead of making the convenience of the house the first consideration.

The room called after Mary Queen of Scots, which is situated high up on the second floor, in one of the pro-

jecting turrets, has three of its sides on the exterior filled with windows; on the inside, however, only one side is lighted, the fireplace occupying the second side and the bed the third. The room is called after Mary and has the arms of Scotland over the door, but there is no record of the exact length of her residence in semi-captivity in this house. She was for seventeen years under the care of the Earl of Shrewsbury and Elizabeth his wife, and towards the end of that time her attractions bade fair to rival those of the redoubtable Bess herself, so that, according to old Fuller, when Queen Elizabeth inquired of the Countess how her guest did, that lady replied, "Madam, she cannot do ill while she is with my husband, and I begin to grow jealous, they are so great together." Fuller adds that in consequence of this intimation Elizabeth, who disliked anything approaching to a friendship between Mary and so great a peer, gave her into the custody of others. Mary was beheaded in 1587, and as the door of her room is dated 1599, the probability is that it was adorned in her memory, evidently not for her own proper delectation.

But leaving the gossip of history, let us look a little more closely into the architectural character of the building. Attention has already been called to the symmetrical character of the plan. The house consists of a large oblong with two projecting turrets on each of the long faces, and one on each of the short faces. The door, as usual, is in the middle of one of the long sides, but the hall into which it gives access is not disposed in the fashion which had been customary up to this period, and which still prevailed in most Elizabethan houses. That fashion is followed in the halls of colleges. It placed the hall lengthways with the building. At the entrance end a strip was cut off by a screen and became a passage called the "screens." The front door was at one end of this passage, the doors of the hall were in one side of it, and the doors to the buttery and kitchen department were in the other. The hall was lighted by windows along the sides, and at the opposite end from the screen was the dais with its bay-window, and beyond this end were the family rooms.

At Hardwick the hall, instead of being placed length-

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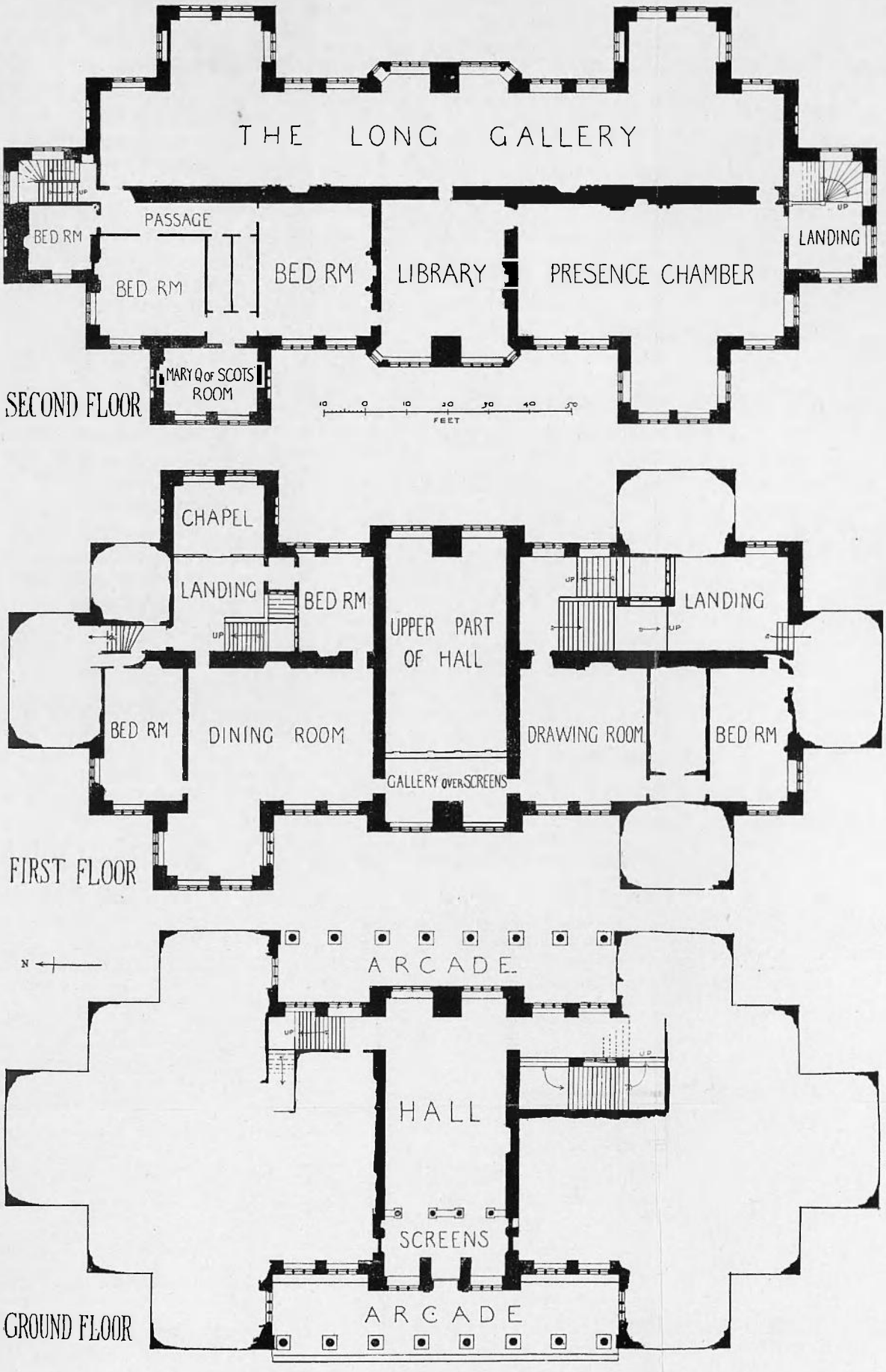

PLANS OF HARDWICK HALL.

ways with the building, goes across it from side to side; instead of being lighted down the sides, it is lighted at the ends; the front door, instead of being in the end of the "screens," is in the middle of one side of them; while at the ends were the doors to the servants' department, and also the buttery hatch—all of which are now built up. This unusual disposition may not seem of much importance, and it may be said that although the hall lies differently in relation to the house, yet all the usual features are there—the screens, the buttery hatch, and so forth. But the difference of arrangement nevertheless is indicative of a momentous change, and one which distinguishes mediaeval houses from modern. Up to Elizabeth's time, and even James I., the hall was the centre of the family life; it lay between the family rooms and those devoted to the servants. The daïs end, with its bay-window, was reserved for the family, and there they dined. Adjacent to this end were the parlour and the staircase leading to the bedrooms and other principal chambers. But already the custom of dining in the hall was falling into desuetude; the family sought smaller and more private rooms. With their withdrawal the character of the hall changed, and it tended to become no longer a living-room, but an entrance-hall or vestibule for passing traffic. This alteration of character became thoroughly established in the time of Inigo Jones, and has remained to the present day. One of the tests of the age of a house is the disposition of its hall. In mediaeval times it was a living-room; in modern times it is a vestibule. The hall at Hardwick, owing to its plan, is leaving the mediaeval type and approaching the modern. It may have had a daïs, but probably not. Even if it had, that end had not the snug feeling of the old-fashioned arrangement, with its bay-window and the fireplace fairly close to the seats of the chief personages. It must have been somewhat uncomfortable, as on each side of that end is a passage leading to a principal staircase. I have said "staircase," but, indeed, Hardwick may be said to have no staircase; it has instead long flights of steps. By "staircase" is meant a special feature, either of wood or stone, such as is the pride of most Elizabethan houses. There were very few stone

staircases in English houses of this period. Burghley House has, so far as I know, the only good example. But there are hundreds of splendid wooden staircases, and in a house of the pretensions of Hardwick one would have expected to find a particularly fine specimen. But throughout the house the detail is disappointing; everything is large and coarse, including chimney-pieces and doorways. It is rather in its general disposition and the size of its rooms that Hardwick is interesting, for when one comes to examine the work closely there is an absence of that fancy and fertility of design which distinguishes the better class of work of that period. But although the means of getting upstairs are not very interesting, there are some fine rooms to go to. There seem to be no family rooms on the ground floor, unless they have been turned from their original purpose. All the principal apartments are on the upper floors, and as each story is unusually lofty the whole height of the building is much greater than was commonly the case. The hall itself is two stories high, and the only access from one half of the house to the other on the first floor lies across the gallery over the screens. The principal rooms on this floor are those now called the dining and drawing-rooms. In addition to these there are a few bedrooms and various small apartments contrived to meet modern requirements. The finest apartments, however, are on the second or top floor, where are the presence-chamber and library and the long gallery, besides a fine bedroom and the room named after Mary Queen of Scots. Above these rooms and partly in the roof are a number of subsidiary bedrooms. The presence-chamber is a large and lofty room with a very deep frieze of modelled and coloured plaster work, representing hunting scenes. The quality of the work is not very high compared with what was being done in Italy and France at the same time; but it has considerable vigour, and imparts a fine and stately character to the room. Over the chimney-piece in the library adjoining is an alabaster panel of very considerable merit, representing Apollo and the Muses. The long gallery occupies the whole length of the east side of the house and is a lofty and handsome room. It is the only apartment which retains its original ceiling,

and as the ceilings of Elizabethan houses exhibited some of the most original and attractive work of the period, Hardwick suffers much from their absence. This particular ceiling, however, has no special claim to admiration ; it is one of the plainest and least interesting with which I am acquainted. In this respect it is only in keeping with the rest of the detail of the house. The long gallery was one of the characteristic features of an Elizabethan house. The longer the better, designers of the day used to think, and although this is of considerable length, being 166 feet long, there were several houses in which the gallery was longer still, reaching to as much as 200 and 250 feet. The rigid symmetry of the external treatment has already been referred to. It is as complete in its way as that of Wollaton, but the latter house derived more than symmetry from the classic proclivities of the day. It also obtained the pilasters and niches with which its walls are adorned. Hardwick has none of these and is an example of the fact that they were by no means a necessary, although they were a very constant ingredient in the design of the period. The treatment of the windows here resembles in some degree that employed at Wollaton, or rather, one should say, Wollaton followed Hardwick to a certain extent. In both places there is a projecting moulding or architrave, which makes a framework round the window and rests at the bottom upon a projecting sill, which is supported by small brackets. The mouldings of the jambs, mullions, and transomes, however, differ in the two examples. The cornices which divide the various floors have only a general resemblance, and the balustrade which crowns the walls is as meagre in the one house as the other. The finish of the turrets here is not so ambitious as at Wollaton, as instead of an elaborate curly gable, there are only the Countess's initials and coronet supported by a Dutch flourish, a humble member of the same family which is so conspicuous on the towers at Wollaton. There are at Hardwick valuable accessory features which are now wanting at Wollaton, as well as at most of the houses of that time which have come down to us, viz. the garden walls and lodge. The lodge was almost as much a part of an Elizabethan home as the great hall and long

gallery, but being of small size and detached from the main building, it has in the majority of cases been swept away in favour of some kind of landscape-garden effect. Happily it has escaped in this instance, and remains, together with its supporting walls, as an example not only of the manner of laying out the approach to an Elizabethan house, but also of the quaint and sometimes unworkmanlike way in which artificers treated their materials. In looking at the lay-out of Hardwick, the visitor must beware of confusing the original arrangement with the excellent garden laid out by Lady Louisa Egerton, on the south side, which, by the lapse of time, has assumed an appearance admirably in keeping with the house. In conclusion, I desire to leave the domain of architecture for an instant to call attention to the great amount and excellent preservation of the tapestry which clothes the walls and vividly illustrates this method of decorating them, and also to the interesting furniture which survives in considerable quantity. These two things reconcile one to the absence of fascinating architectural detail, and help to make Hardwick one of the fine examples of a large Elizabethan house.