

WHERE MR. CHAMBERLAIN LIVES.



THE RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, M.P.

(From a photograph by Messrs. Elliott & Fry, Baker Street, W.)

THE residence of Mr. Chamberlain at Moor Green, on the outskirts of Birmingham, is significant in its way of the new order—if it is not already beginning to be old—of men and things in statesmanship. A big villa, with what Lord Randolph Churchill contemptuously called “pineries and vineries,” built less than twenty years ago, within the tram-car area of the busy town in which Mr. Chamberlain, like his father before him, was engaged in trade; such is the home of the statesman who has attained to power and position second only to those of Prime Minister. Compared with Hatfield or Hawarden, Chatsworth or Mentmore, the house and its environments are quite unimpressive. Yet good taste cannot

be denied to the building of red-tinted brick and white stone, with its various-shaped windows, wood-covered gables, and sloping grey roof. The Birmingham smoke has long since chastened its newness, and ivy and creeper have been induced to give the walls a touch of the picturesque.

Highbury—Mr. Chamberlain named his house, I believe, after the North London suburb in which he lived for many years—is approached from the main road by what is still a rustic lane with hedges and fields on either side. The city is advancing rapidly, however, and year by year the view from Mr. Chamberlain’s windows is getting more and more dotted with other villas. When the right hon. gentleman built his house, seclusion was not

his first object; he desired to be within easy driving distance of the municipal buildings in which he was working day by day for the welfare of his fellow-citizens. Birmingham has grown at even greater speed, perhaps, than was foreseen by its most popular Mayor, and I dare say there are times when Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain wish that their domicile were a little further from its noise and smoke. As it is, Mr. Chamberlain has assured himself of a larger amount of open space around Highbury by recently purchasing the greater part of an adjoining property and adding it to his own. Originally about thirty acres, the grounds of Highbury now contain over seventy acres. The adjoining property on one side belonged to a member of the Cadbury family; Mr. Chamberlain's neighbour on the other side is his brother Arthur, whose house and grounds somewhat resemble Highbury.

The suburban conventionality of Mr. Chamberlain's dwelling-place ends with the front door. Passing through a short corridor you find yourself in a large and lofty hall which, with a gallery opening into the upper rooms, occupies the whole of the central space of the house. It is prettily and cosily

furnished with thick rugs and easy chairs, several vases of cut flowers, two or three dainty tables on which some current books and magazines are to be found, and a number of landscapes and "subject" pictures by artists who are well known and otherwise. This bright and pleasant apartment, with its polished oak floor, becomes the ball-room on occasions. On the right are the breakfast-room, Mrs. Chamberlain's boudoir, and the drawing-room; and on the left the dining-room. From a side corridor, which leads from the entrance hall, opens Mr. Chamberlain's library and his secretary's rooms. For smoking-rooms there are the library and Mr. Austen's room. At Highbury one soon discovers that its owner has practically but one recreation—the culture of the orchid.

Mr. Chamberlain's library is a large square room, at a corner of the house, with a finely panelled ceiling, and broad windows of tinted glass, through which there is a good distant view of the Worcestershire hills. The first thing which caught my eye on entering the room was a photographic portrait of Mr. Gladstone over the white marble mantelpiece. It has hung there, I was told, for a dozen years or more. In the secretary's room are



MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S LIBRARY AT HIGHBURY.



ONE OF THE ORCHID-HOUSES.

large framed photographs of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright, and a pen-and-ink copy of a *Punch* cartoon by Tenniel of Mr. Chamberlain as "The Cherub" at the time of the agitation over his Merchant Shipping Bill. The open oaken book-shelves, ranged round the library contain works of reference on every subject. History, biography, poetry, and general literature, English and French, are all well represented. A writing-desk near the windows—for the use of Mr. Chamberlain—is generally covered by Parliamentary and official papers. I am struck by the apparent absence of blue-books and similar literature until I discover an abundance of them in a smaller room adjoining, which is given up to Mr. Wilson's use. In curious contrast to these business-like apartments is the room

which, since Mr. Chamberlain married for the third time in 1888, has been Mrs. Chamberlain's boudoir. It is one's *beau-ideal* of a lady's sanctum with its delicately tinted silk and satin curtains, screens, and upholstery, a small bookcase mostly given up to miniature volumes of the American poets, tea-table and tea service, water-colour drawings and friends' photos.

The corridor between these rooms and the hall contains a number of interesting souvenirs of Mr. Chamberlain's brilliant career. Among the number are several relating to the part he played in the settlement of the dispute with the United States about the Behring Sea Fisheries. In one frame are the portraits and signatures of the statesmen and diplomats who signed the treaty, together with the steel pen used for the purpose. There are innumerable illuminated addresses from Liberal and Liberal Unionist Associations—significant testimony to Mr. Chamberlain's platform activity in various parts of the country—and several scrolls presenting to him the "freedom" of municipal boroughs.

In the drawing-room and dining-room on



THE LAKE IN THE GROUNDS, HIGHBURY.

the other side of the house, the best of the pictures Mr. Chamberlain has not given to the Birmingham Art Gallery are to be found—some fine specimens of the work of David Cox, A. W. Hunt, Pettie, F. Walker, C. Fielding,

portraits of Mrs. Chamberlain's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Endicott, of Washington. In the dining-room I am most interested in the portraits, which include one of Mr. Chamberlain's father and another of Lord Randolph Churchill,

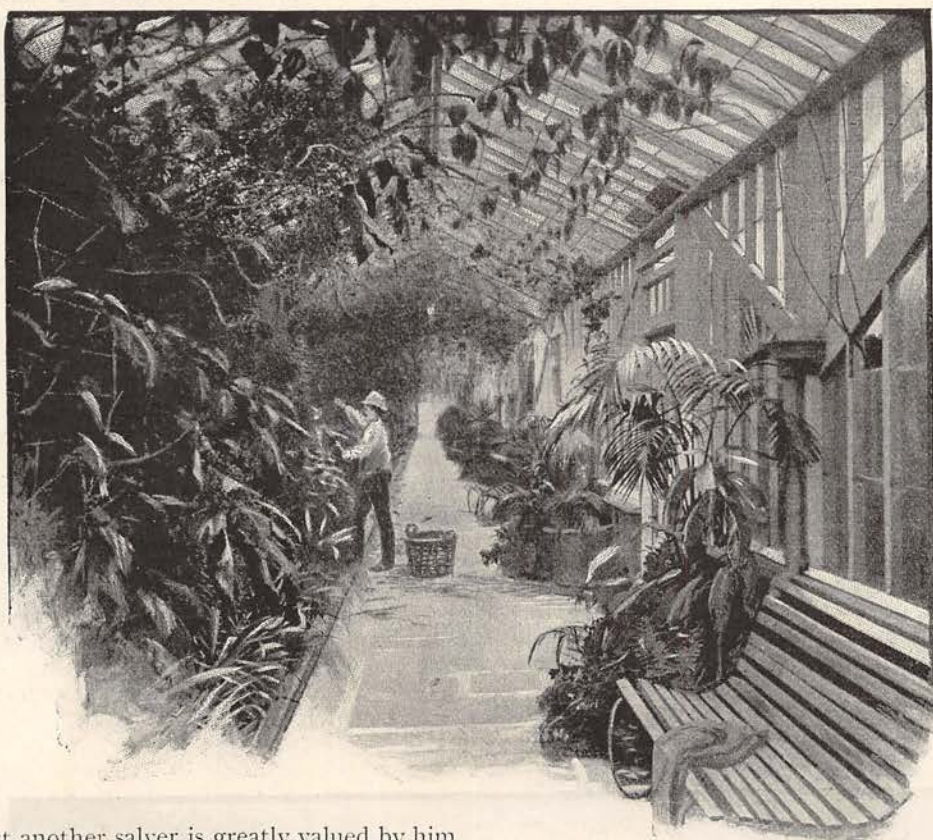


MR. CHAMBERLAIN RECEIVING DESPATCHES FOR APPROVAL AND SIGNATURE IN HIS ROOM AT THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

Marcus Stone, Brett, Lewis, and other distinguished English painters. A feature of the drawing-room, which is tastefully furnished in subdued tints, is the big palm in one corner of the room. Somehow or other, Mr. Chamberlain's gardeners have succeeded in preserving the perfect freshness and greenness of this beautiful plant without taking it out of the room except for occasional ablutions. On a cabinet of black and gold stand

presented with his autograph to the Secretary for the Colonies after a cordial friendship had sprung up between the erstwhile bitter opponents.

Mr. Chamberlain can, if he pleases, adorn his dinner-table with presentation plate which, in some measure, tells the story of his life. Among other things is the silver salver presented to his grandfather by that historic body, the Cordwainers' Company of London,



ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF THE ORCHIDS.

whilst another salver is greatly valued by him because it testifies to the goodwill borne him by the workmen of "Nettlefold and Chamberlain" when he retired from business in 1874. A silver cup among the presentation plate was given by Lord Randolph Churchill. In the company of such things, under the protection of impregnable iron, are the silver trowels used by Mr. Chamberlain in laying the foundation stones of several of the principal buildings of Birmingham, including the fine municipal buildings. There are also curious specimens of silver ware picked up by him in the course of foreign travel.

From the drawing-room, where Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain receive several hundred guests in the course of an evening, you walk into a charming conservatory, filled with the scent of the sweetest flowers and shaded by the foliage of the finest tropical plants. A fountain of alabaster plays in the centre, and amidst the gentle rhythm of the water sparkling in the electric light, several seductive chairs tempt you to delightful ease. The conservatory opens into a series of glass-houses, filled with Mr. Chamberlain's famous collection of orchids, which can all be visited without once venturing into the open air.

For the enjoyment of the feast of colour which, at times, this collection affords, Mr. Chamberlain has had all the orchid houses furnished with the electric light and paved with tessellated stones. There are, with recent additions, about thirty glass-houses at High-bury, and of this number one-third are devoted to the cultivation of the orchid. But, although he has made a hobby of orchids, the Colonial Secretary grows almost every kind of flower under glass or in the open garden. In two or three houses the rose—which is Mrs. Chamberlain's favourite flower—is grown in large numbers and with great success.

Outside the glass-houses are several acres of well-kept flower beds. The grounds are well furnished with timber and foliage, and although few of the trees are remarkable for age or size, there is a yew which is said to be mentioned as a landmark in Domesday Book. The winding walks lead to one or two grottos and ferneries and a lake large enough for

boating and fishing. In another part of the grounds is a little dairy in which the ladies of the house are accustomed in summer-time to serve afternoon tea to their friends. This rustic retreat adjoins some farm buildings, for Mr. Austen Chamberlain takes an enthusiastic interest in agriculture, and on a large part of his father's acres experiments in stock-raising.

About twenty gardeners are usually employed at Highbury, the care of the orchids making the demand the whole of the time of three of the number. For the welfare of these plants an experienced orchidist is held responsible, but Mr. Chamberlain himself still contrives to take a keen personal interest in their cultivation. On his Saturday to Monday visits, and when residing at Highbury during the Parliamentary recess, the best part of his little leisure is spent in the plant houses. Every plant is numbered according to a private catalogue the right hon. gentleman himself keeps, and the gardeners declare that every one of the five or six thousand specimens at Highbury is individually known to him. In this great collection of orchids, all the gardeners

naturally take pride, and visitors are shown a number of cards in their sheds awarding various prizes at "shows" in Birmingham and the neighbourhood to Mr. Chamberlain's exhibits. For the benefit of the gardeners, by the way, the right hon. gentleman has established a provident fund, and from his own pocket doubles every contribution made to it by them.

As I have indicated, a liberal use of the electric light is made at Highbury, and this is supplied on the premises, the engine house being close to the moderate-sized stables. Mr. Chamberlain planned this supply of his own when the domestic use of the light was still in its infancy, and even now he occasionally devises little improvements in his house and grounds. For the right hon. gentleman would seem to have retained all his old affection for his Birmingham home, notwithstanding the glamour of London life. He tries to spend as much time as he possibly can there, and when away from Highbury he is always in touch with its household. For one thing, he receives from it a regular supply of his beloved flower for the decoration of his table and the adornment of his person.

FREDERICK DOLMAN.



HIGHBURY.

(From a photograph by Draycott, Birmingham.)