

A GLIMPSE OF OSTERLEY PARK.

BELONGING TO THE EARL OF JERSEY.

By ELIZABETH BALCH.



HE original "Manor of Osterlee" belonged to one John de Osterlee in the time of Edward I., and after passing through several hands, being held as church lands by the Prior and Convent of Sheen, and again by the Abbess and Convent of Syon, after twice reverting to the crown, it eventually became the property of the merchant prince, Sir Thomas Gresham, in 1570. The mansion constructed by him, was, we are told, widely celebrated for its splendour, and its splendid hospitality. To it, amongst others, came that universal visitor Queen Elizabeth, in all the dignity of ruff and farthingale. In her honour there was feasting, and dancing, and various exhibitions held in high esteem at the time, and so loyal was the knight her host, that when her Majesty expressed the opinion that the court in front of the house was too large, and "would appear more handsome if divided with a wall in the middle," a wall was straightway erected, silently, during the night, while the maiden Queen slept. On her awakening she was astonished to find her suggestion solidly realized, the court was divided by a wall of stone. Whether her appreciation of this prompt deference to her ideas was shown in equally substantial fashion we are not told, but on the other hand we learn that Sir Thomas paid the penalty which mortals generally incur when they inconvenience themselves in order to please others. There were those not slow to find a cutting witticism wherewith to describe the knightly action, and courtiers laughed loudly when the wits remarked that "any house is more easily divided than united." Some well-known domestic differences existing in the Gresham family sharpened the saying into painful meaning, and added a piquant zest to the words, but this only heightened the enjoyment of the wits, and made their laughter more hearty.

After the death of Lady Gresham, Sir Edward Coke, the Earl of Desmond, Sir William Waller, and Dr. Nicholas Barbon, in turn resided at Osterley, which was by the last-named occupant mortgaged to Sir Francis Child, Lord Mayor of London, and the first banker who gave up the goldsmith's business, these two branches being in olden times almost invariably united under the same firm. For many years Messrs. Child and Co. were tenants of the chamber over Temple Bar.

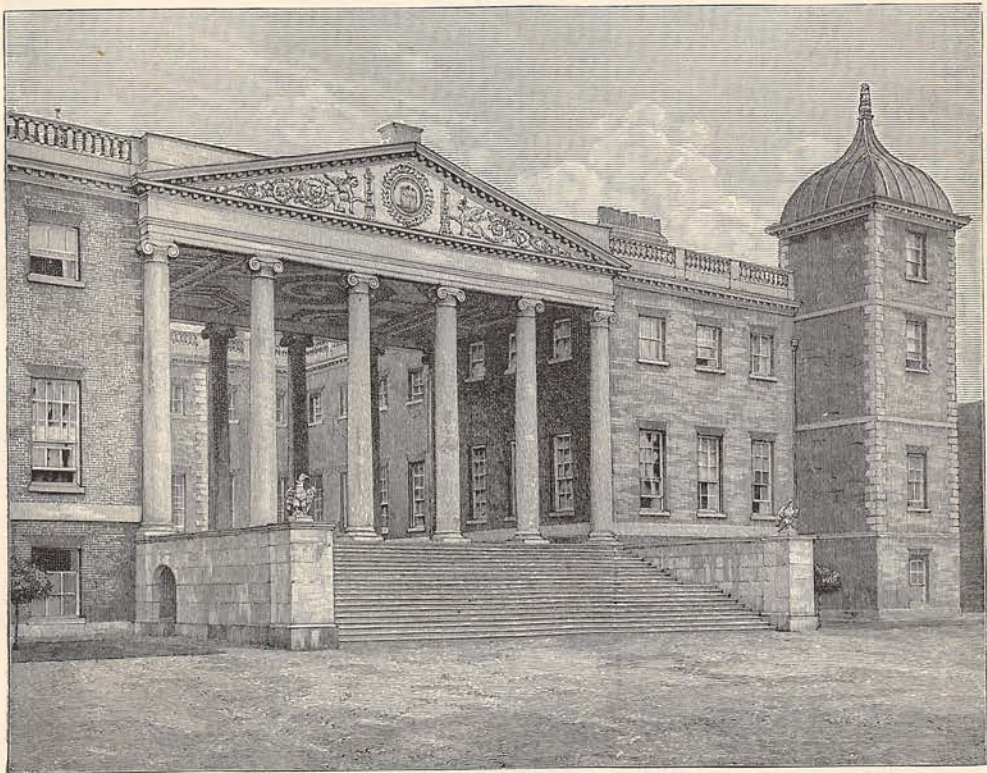
There is a good portrait of Sir Francis Child at Osterley, taken in his Lord Mayor's robes, and bearing the date 1699, but not until 1711 did Osterley itself pass into his hands. From him the place descended to Robert Child, Esq., who strongly objected to giving his beautiful daughter in marriage to the wild and impecunious young Earl of Westmoreland. One day this ardent lover proposed a question to the father of the girl he meant to win for his wife, if pluck and determination could secure her, and very dexterously did he avail himself of the answer.

"Child," said the younger man to the elder, "I wish for your opinion on the following case: Suppose that you were in love with a girl, and her father refused his consent to the union, what should you do?"

"Why! run away with her, to be sure," replied the banker promptly; and the young nobleman took him at his word. In true old-fashioned style he came to Berkeley

Square in a postchaise and four, and eloped with the lovely heiress who smiles at one to-day from the walls of the gallery at Osterley, in the charming portrait painted by Romney. The girl's indignant father followed the runaways so quickly, and so nearly overtook them that Lord Westmoreland stood up in his carriage and shot the leading horse of Mr. Child's chaise, which stopped the pursuit long enough for the lovers to get over the Border, and to be married at Gretna Green.

Very wrathful was the father at being outwitted by his determined son-in-law, and he vowed that no son and heir of Lord Westmoreland should inherit his fortune. The whole of it, with Osterley included, was left by will to his child's eldest daughter, that Lady Sarah Fane, who on May 23rd, 1804, married George Villiers, fifth Earl of Jersey. By his marriage, Lord Jersey became the head of the oldest bank in England, which still flourishes, although Temple Bar is gone and the Villiers family bear the additional surname of Child.



THE PORTICO.

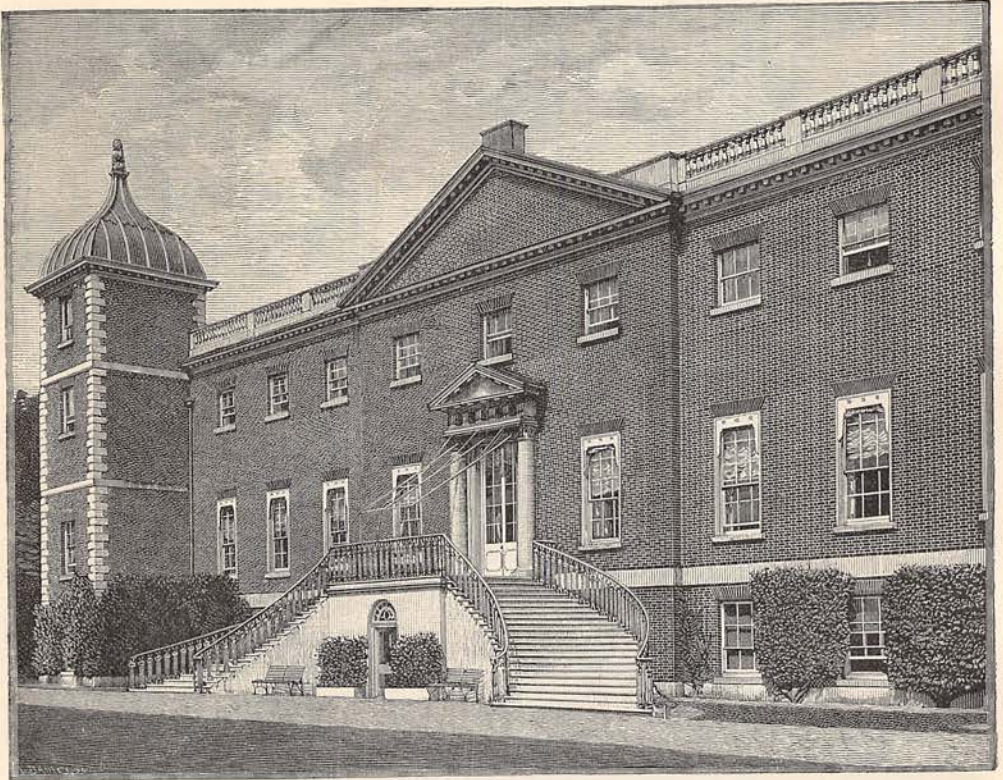
Long before Osterley came into the possession of the Earls of Jersey, when it was still the residence of Sir Thomas Gresham, the wealthy city knight, a poor little homeless scion of royalty, the Lady Mary Gray, was an unwilling prisoner, there entertained by a most unwilling host. This was in 1569. She was small almost to dwarfishness, this troublesome little Tudor princess, but the royal will of King Edward VI. had entailed the regal succession of England and Ireland upon her and her posterity, in the event of her elder sisters dying without heirs, therefore she was an important personage. We all know how these sisters died: the noble Lady Jane Gray, "Jane the Quene," upon the scaffold, a victim to the mad ambition of others; and the Lady Katherine Gray, wife of the Earl of Hertford, at Sir Owen Hopton's residence in Suffolk, after long years of imprisonment, a victim of Elizabeth's jealous state policy.

It is said that Sir Thomas Gresham added princely bribes to earnest entreaties that he might be relieved of his royal guest, but in spite of both the Lady Mary was left during several years in his charge, either at Gresham House or at Osterley. From this latter place, after the death of her husband, Thomas Keyes, the luckless prisoner

wrote to Lord Burghley "that as God had taken away the cause of her Majesty's displeasure, she begged to be restored to her favour, that great and long-desired jewel." But all the knight's entreaties, all his wife's impatience at this unwished-for addition to the household, all the letters of the Lady Mary herself, were unavailing, and Osterley was not always, whilst used as a prison house, quite the peaceful retreat that it now looks.

After seven long years of durance under the charge of first one and then another unwilling gaoler, poor little Lady Mary Gray was allowed a freedom she scarcely knew the use of, and at last she died, destitute and obscure, yet nevertheless heiress by the unrepealed Act of Parliament Settlement, to the royal crown of England.

Some of the old tapestry at Osterley, hanging in a side corridor, represents the three elements, air, earth, and water; fire, the fourth element, is missing. One entire

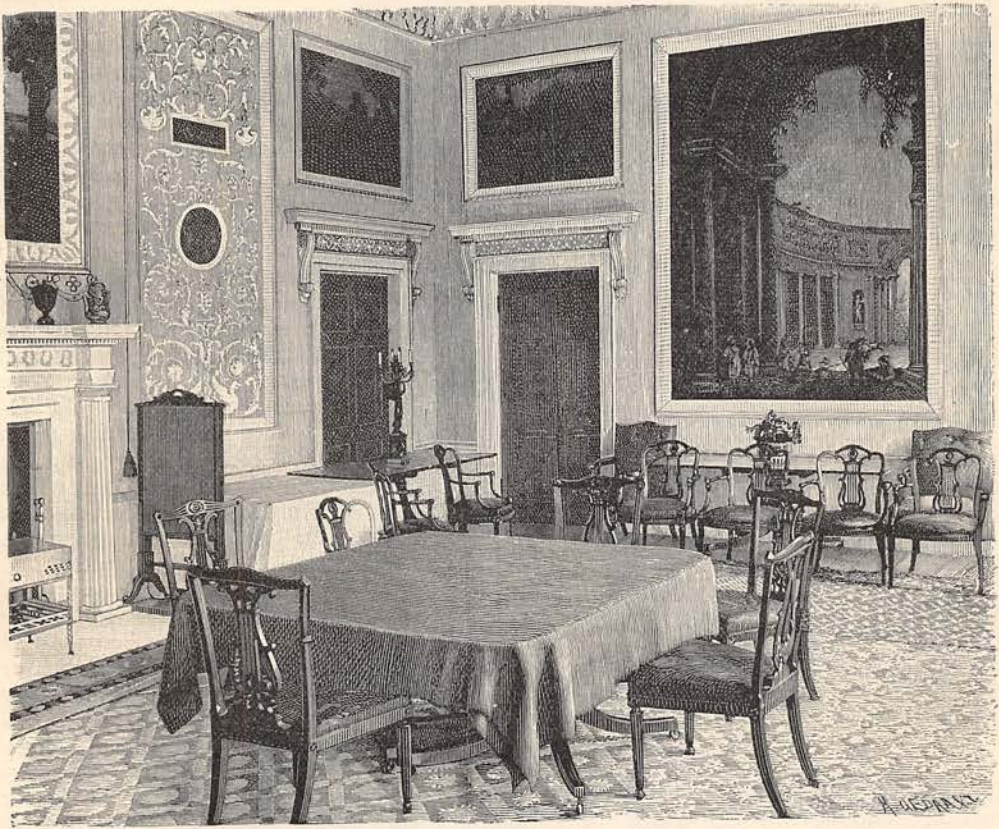


THE GARDEN FRONT.

room is decorated with rose Gobelin. The colouring of this Gobelin tapestry is as perfect to-day as when it was first brought from France, although that date was 1775. In design the carpet of the room corresponds with the decorations of the ceiling, an idea which Adam was particularly fond of carrying out. Delicate medallions are painted on the ceiling, the work of Angelica Kauffmann, and small painted medallions are introduced among the carvings of the white marble mantelpiece. In one corner of this room stands an ebony and silver table supporting a large silver-framed mirror, which are said to have been used by Queen Elizabeth, and were given to the Countess of Shrewsbury by George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham. A rare inlaid cabinet is near this, and on a large table a rose-coloured satin table cover with rich Indian embroidery harmonizes well with the rose tapestry of an earlier date.

While Angelica Kauffmann painted the medallions on the ceiling in this room, her husband, Zucchi, was busy with his brush in the large dining-room, where the peculiar style of the Adam decorations has full play. The walls of this apartment are in tints of the tenderest green and the very palest pink, these colours being panelled by delicate scroll-work and artistic designs in the white composition which was known only to the

Adam brothers. Three large pictures, and several smaller ones, all being scenes and landscapes by Zucchi, are framed in this white scroll-work, while the same curving lines, with grapes and vine leaves, outline the pink and green panels of the ceiling, the design of which corresponds with the design of the neutral-tinted carpet. The tiny scroll pattern of the window mouldings are repeated in the ornamentation of the mahogany doors with their artistic brass locks, and are again found in the design of the buffets and side tables, where the ram's head is introduced, which recurs more than once in both furniture and ornaments. Even the tablecloths were made to correspond in their woven patterns, and some are still in use bearing the date 1779. This careful and minute arrangement of detail is found only in an "Adam house," the style of which is equivalent to the Louis XVI. style in France, although some years anterior to it. Osterley is supposed to be the purest specimen of this style extant in England, the house where the ideas of the Adam brothers found their fullest vent.



THE DINING ROOM.

The outside of the house is of dark-red brick, built in the form of a quadrangle, the centre of which is an open court. The large portico preceding this open court, is reached by a broad flight of stone steps, and is supported by twelve Ionic columns of grey stone. The roofing of the portico as well as the end walls, is richly decorated with scrolls and artistic designs executed in the same white composition of which Adam was almost inordinately fond. Upon leaving the portico, and crossing the open court, one reaches the great hall of entrance, where the white decorations upon a greyish-blue ground of the walls and ceiling, at once suggest those of the celebrated Wedgewood china. Statues here stand in niches, and marble busts on pedestals; quaint old couches covered with green leather, the white wood-work carved in classical patterns introducing the ram's head which is found frequently throughout the house, stand as uncompromising relics of earlier days when soft cushioned lounging divans were unknown. The floor of the hall is of tiled marble. Out of the hall runs the

long gallery 130 feet in length, at one end of which hangs a portrait of the first Duke of Buckingham, by Rubens, that celebrated George Villiers who was the favourite of Charles II., and whose elder half-brother was the ancestor of the Earls of Jersey. Opposite this picture at the other end of the gallery is a Vandyck portrait of Charles I. on a white horse, almost identical with the one at Highclere Castle. It is said that six of these particular portraits of the unfortunate King are in existence, one of them being the property of her Majesty Queen Victoria. The lovely Sarah, Countess of Westmoreland, already mentioned, painted by Romney, hangs opposite her husband, by the same artist, but the picture of the celebrated Countess of Jersey, daughter of Lady Westmoreland, is to be found in Lord Jersey's room. Lord Byron sang of her beauty, and Mr. Greville writes of her "vivacity, spirit, and good nature," as well as of "her funny good qualities." Lady Jersey was in her day a great social power,

and was one of the famous committee who decided upon the rights of admission to Almack's, for which more qualifications were needed than most people possess for admission to heaven.

Lord Malmesbury in his diary speaks of Lady Jersey as "a most remarkable woman, and almost a European personage, for no crowned head or representative of royalty ever landed in England without immediately calling upon her, and being found in her *salon* during his stay."

It is in the drawing-room at Osterley that we find the crimson and gold frieze which Horace Walpole wrote of as having been taken from the Palace of the Sun, but which, with parts of the design of the ceiling, was in reality copied from the Acropolis at Greece. There is more colour in this room than in any other apartment of the house, always excepting the tapestry room, but colour so wonder-



THE STATE BED.

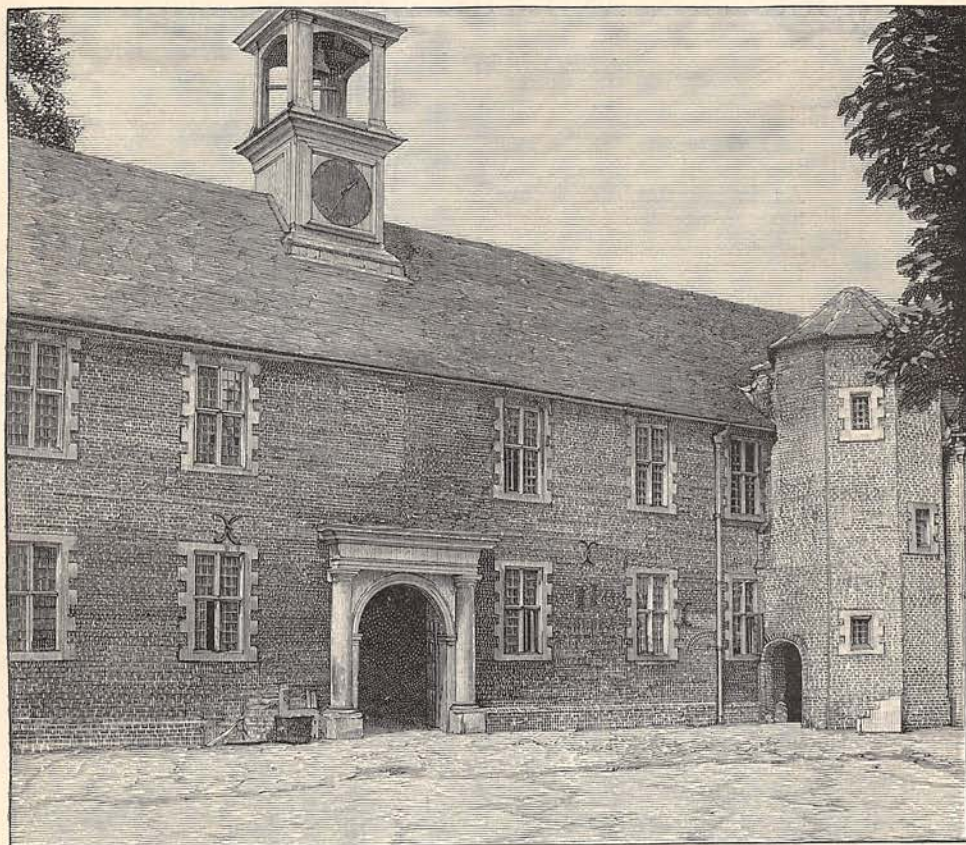
fully blended that no one tint offends the eye. Pale blues and pinks, and a lovely mellow golden-green with which the greens of to-day cannot be made to harmonize, and dark-red and gold all blend curiously one with another. More carved mahogany doors are here, more quaint artistic locks in brass, and a wide silver grate with silver fire-dogs, the chairs that "make harmony," and softly-coloured brocades and damasks. But no crude sketch in black and white can give any idea of this rainbow-hued colouring, formed of tints and tones and shades, with graceful curving lines, and tender touches of artistic skill displayed everywhere, in this spot "worthy of Eve before the Fall."

A portrait of Mr. Child, by Romney, is the principal picture in the drawing-room.

All pure and almost cold is the white and green of Lady Jersey's own room, with its large bed having a dome not unlike the Napoleon tomb at the Invalides, and slender, flower-painted posts, and delicate silken hangings. Over the carved white marble chimney-piece hangs one of the many beautiful mirrors to be found in all the rooms of the house, where cupids support the Child crest of an eagle. Of all these mirrors perhaps the best is the one in Mrs. Child's dressing-room, where the lovely face of Lady Westmoreland as a child, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, is framed

with the glass in carved white wood. Picture and setting are perfect in their purity and grace.

Beside those already mentioned there is a Pompeiian room painted by Angelica Kauffmann, which is now used as a schoolroom; and Lord Jersey's room, hung in pale yellow, and having slender-legged Chippendale chairs and tables; and the staircase, above which is the ceiling painted by Rubens, with the apotheosis of William Prince of Orange, assassinated at Delft, in 1584. It was Robert Child who brought this painting from Holland. In the hall below the staircase hang three curious lamps, in the forms of rams' heads. And last but not least comes the cool, quiet library. Green is here again the prevailing colour, while all the woodwork and the bookcases, as well as the frames and decorations, are of carved white wood. More pictures by



THE STABLE COURT.

Zucchi, of pastoral subjects, and singularly soft in colouring, adorn both walls and ceiling.

Amongst the curious things at Osterley must be mentioned a great silver bath, or wine-cooler—for both uses have been suggested as possible for the massive round bowl-shaped dish weighing 1,680 ounces, having the royal arms of England in the centre, and the arms of the Childs on shields supported by lions. There are said to be eleven such baths of different designs in England.

There are no picturesque undulations in the park, but the very monotony of the stretching green where the cattle feed peacefully, produces a restful, almost dreamy sensation in its quiet seclusion, enclosed by a belt of further trees which stand like sentinels between the drowsy quiet of the place and the restless roar of the great city only nine miles away.