

HISTORIC LONDON HOUSES.

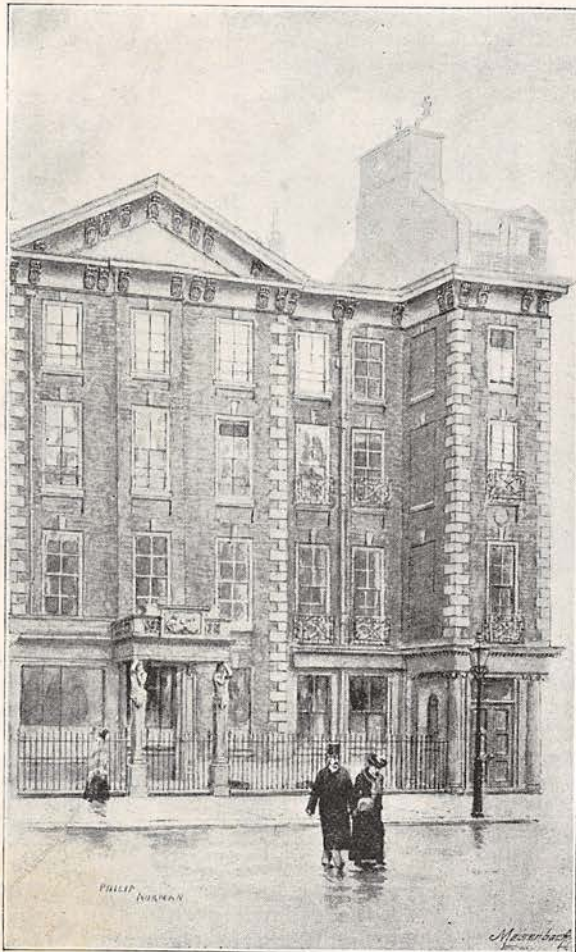
By PHILIP NORMAN.

IN the good old times we call the Middle Ages London was strongly fortified, and so small that a walk of half an hour or less would have taken one from any part of it into the fields. Most of our noble families then dwelt within the walls of the city. After the Reformation statesmen and court favourites established themselves in the neighbour-

hood of the Strand, displacing the great church dignitaries who before had their town dwellings along the river-bank. The palaces of the Howards and Cecils, and of such men as the Protector Somerset, were doubtless most picturesque, with their gardens running down to the Thames, which, clear and abounding in fish, formed a pleasant and comparatively

rapid means of communication between the City and Westminster, when the Strand was as yet a mere slough of despond. The fine old watergate of York House, designed it is said by Inigo Jones, and now half-buried in the Embankment, is a relic of those days. But fashions change, and the growth of London seems irresistible. In Hatton's *New View* (1708) there is a list of "eminent houses of the nobility" from which one learns that they were then scattered over a wide area. Two of the finest were the Duke of Buckingham's house, on the site of which Buckingham Palace now stands, and Montague House, afterwards converted into the British Museum.

Among the rest mention is made of Schomberg House on the south side of Pall Mall, part of which still survives. Its proportions have been spoilt by the removal of one wing, but it is still a pleasant specimen of the style of architecture in vogue towards the end of the seventeenth century when "Dutch William" was our ruler. It seems to have been built for the third and last Duke of Schomberg, second son of the man who, when past eighty, died a hero's death at the battle of the Boyne; and in



SCHOMBERG HOUSE, PALL MALL.

1699, almost as soon as the bricks were dry, a party of disbanded soldiers threatened to pull it down. The house passed into the hands of Lord Holderness, by whom, in 1760, it was let to the Duke of Cumberland, victor at Culloden. Five years later "Beau" Astley, the portrait painter, who had married Lady Daniell, a wealthy widow, bought it for £5,000 and spent as much more in converting it into three dwellings, and fitting up the central part fantastically for his own use. It was most likely he who set up the bas-relief of panting over the doorway,

Temple" endeavoured to "entertain ladies and gentlemen of candour and good nature" by reading a lecture on the simplest and most efficacious means of preserving "health, beauty, and serene mental brilliancy, even to the extremest old age." Soon, however, the farce was played out, and in 1786 Graham was succeeded by Richard Cosway, prince of miniature painters, and his handsome wife. They lived here some years, and society flocked to their parties which were not unfrequently attended by the Prince of Wales, who had access to them



NO. 10, DOWNING STREET, FROM THE GARDEN.

which still remains. In his younger days, when studying art at Rome, he had been so poor that he once transformed an old canvas into the back of a waistcoat, and one hot summer's day, incautiously taking off his coat in the presence of some brother artists, he showed that he was carrying on his back a study of a terrific chasm and a tremendous waterfall. In the spring of 1781 the central portion of Schomberg House was let to Dr. Graham, the quack, who exhibited here his *Temple of Hymen* and *Celestial Bed*, and here "the blooming Priestess of the

through a private door from the garden of Carlton House.

The western wing of Schomberg House was occupied from 1774 by that great artist and worthy man, Thomas Gainsborough, and here he expired in 1788. Reynolds had visited him by his request a few days before, when he used the oft-quoted words: "We are all going to Heaven and Vandyck is of the company." And here in the following spring his widow held an exhibition of his works still remaining on her hands. The subsequent history of the house is of no special inter-

est. The east wing was pulled down in 1850, to make room for the enlargement of what was then called the Ordnance Office. The whole is now incorporated in the War Office.

In the neighbourhood of Whitehall two mansions exist which have an interest quite apart from their somewhat modest architectural pretensions. Melbourne House, now called Dover House, opposite the Banqueting Hall, is one of these. Originally built for Sir Matthew Featherstonhaugh, it passed into the hands of Lord Melbourne, whose son, the Prime Minister, was born there in 1779. It was afterwards bought for the Duke of York, when the portico and domed vestibule were added from the design of Henry Holland, architect, which occasioned the remark of the blind Lord North that the Duke had been sent to the Round House. In 1794 the Lamb family returned; it afterwards came into the possession of Lord Dover, and is now converted into public offices.

Within a stone's throw of this building is No. 10 Downing Street, the official home of the first Lord of the Treasury ever since Sir Robert Walpole moved into it from St. James's Square in 1735. It had belonged to the crown, and had been granted by George I. to Baron Bothmar, the Hanoverian Minister, for life. The residence really consists of two houses with a covered way connecting them. That which faces the street is a plain Georgian structure, resembling Nos. 11 and 12, which form part of the same block. The building at the back seems little to accord with its surroundings. It stands in a garden much frequented by wood-pigeons; on a misty morning in spring one might imagine it to be on the outskirts of some peaceful country town. My view, showing the south side, was taken in the year 1888. I have ventured to clothe the little figures in costumes which seem to harmonise more with the old place than the frock coats and trousers of the present day. The windows opening on to the terrace belong to the famous old cabinet room, where Pitt and Sir Robert Peel, Disraeli and Palmerston have often sat. On to that terrace one memorable afternoon in May 1872, the members of the Liberal Cabinet had sauntered after a council, which was held, as Mr. Wemyss Reid tells us, for the purpose of hearing the decision of the Geneva Arbitration Court with regard to the indirect claims, and here they were sketched by Mr. Fair-

field, who from a window in the Colonial Office saw the unusual sight. The old cabinet room is now turned into an office for Mr. Gladstone's secretaries, and the long table with its green cloth has, for a time at any rate, found a home elsewhere. In the large reception room on the first floor are a series of interesting portraits, the best perhaps being that of Richard Weston, Earl of Portland, Lord High Treasurer in 1633. The portly form of Sir Robert Walpole is in the place of honour, empanelled above a fine marble mantelpiece. The dining-room with its coved ceiling is in the front building; it has been little used for the last few years. I will conclude this brief notice by reminding my readers of a melancholy episode which occurred at No. 10 Downing Street, on January 12th, 1887. It was in the ante-room on the first floor that the Earl of Iddesleigh breathed his last, dying as he had lived in the service of his country.

From the quiet dwelling so intimately connected with some of our greatest modern statesmen, let us turn our thoughts to a house with the name of which we are all familiar, but in connection with art rather than politics. In amateur painters this country is prolific, but our amateur architects may be counted on the fingers. Of these perhaps the most notable has been Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington, an enthusiastic student of Inigo Jones and Palladio, who reconstructed Burlington House (built originally for his great grandfather) and designed the famous colonnade in front, the stones of which are now falling to decay in Battersea Park. I should add, however, that Colin Campbell, a professional architect, employed by the Earl, in no less a book than *Vitruvius Britannicus*, took credit for the front and gateway, and that in his patron's lifetime. As was the case in most of Burlington's designs this house seems to have been planned for effect rather than comfort. Hence the paraphrase of Martial's epigram, which has been ascribed to Lord Chesterfield and also to John Lord Hervey:—

“ Possess'd of one great hall of state,
Without a room to sleep or eat;
How well you build let flatt'ry tell
And all mankind how ill you dwell.”

The Earl's architectural efforts elsewhere were satirised by both these candid friends. Of the house designed by him

for General Wade in Old Burlington Street (not Cork Street, as we are usually told), Lord Chesterfield suggested that "as the General could not live in it to his ease he had better take a house over against it and look at it;" while of his Palladian villa at Chiswick so lately dismantled, it was remarked by Lord Hervey that "it was too small to live in and too large to hang to a watch." Two wings however were added to this classic building at the end of last century. The design by Hogarth called "The Man of Taste," shows Burlington Gate crowned by a

altered since the days of Lord Burlington. The largest is the library, formerly the ball-room, which runs from the front to the back. There are in all four coved ceilings adorned with paintings on canvas, said to be by Sebastian or Marco Ricci; perhaps Sir James Thornhill had a hand in them. A fifth is on plaster. There are also some fine marble mantelpieces; that in the council-room, however, is a comparatively modern introduction; it was designed by Joseph Wilton, R.A. (who modelled the ornaments for the Coronation State carriage), and was not unlikely



LANSDOWNE HOUSE FROM BERKELEY SQUARE.

statue of William Kent, to whom Lord Burlington was so great a benefactor, while the latter figures as a labourer climbing a ladder, to reach a scaffold where stands Pope, busily plastering the front. While so engaged he splashes the foot passengers below, the most prominent of whom is the Duke of Chandos.

The colonnade of Burlington House was swept away in 1866 and the whole building has been transformed. Outside the charmed circle of the Royal Academy few people are aware that on the first floor there is a fine suite of rooms, little

his diploma work. Originally in the quarters of the Royal Academy at Somerset House it migrated to Trafalgar Square, and has now found a permanent home.

The Albany, next to Burlington House on the east side, deserves a passing recognition. Designed by Sir William Chambers, it was sold in 1770 by Stephen Fox, second Lord Holland, to the first Viscount Melbourne, who in 1794 exchanged it with Frederick Duke of York and Albany, for his former house at Whitehall, of which a brief account has



BOURDON HOUSE, DAVIES STREET.

already been given. It was converted into chambers in 1804, the garden at the back being built over to add to the accommodation, and since then many eminent men have lived there, among whom may be named George Canning, Lord Byron, Lord Althorp, Bulwer Lytton and Macaulay.

Of still existing mansions built for

great noblemen in the eighteenth century the most famous perhaps is Devonshire House. Outside, indeed, there is little display; one might still apply to it the Latin epigram, said to have been written by Sir Robert Walpole:—

“ Ut dominus domus est, non extra fulta
columnis
Marmoreis splendet, quod tenet intus habet.”

Here, as at a theatre where no great scenic effect is attempted, one's thoughts turn all the more freely to the actors. In 1784, as we are told by Sir N. W. Wraxall, the great rallying points of the coalition against Pitt were Carlton House, Burlington House, and Devonshire House, where Georgiana, the charming Duchess of Devonshire, was the leading spirit. The influence of the Cavendish family seems perennial. Devonshire House stands on the site of Berkeley

from power it passed, as yet unfinished, into the hands of Lord Shelburne, afterwards the first Marquis of Lansdowne, to whose descendant it still belongs. The house was designed by Robert Adam; embowered in foliage it certainly has a picturesque effect from the adjoining Berkeley Square. Dividing the gardens of Lansdowne House and Devonshire House is Lansdowne Passage, a short cut for walkers from Curzon Street to Hay Hill. Thomas Grenville records that the



PART OF PAINTED CEILING, BY ANGELICA KAUFFMAN, IN THE DINING-ROOM OF SIR JOHN LESLIE'S HOUSE. SUBJECT, "VENUS AND ADONIS."

House, built for Lord Berkeley of Stratton, which in its turn was built on the site of a farm called "Hay Hill Farm" soon after the Restoration. The grounds, still extensive, included Berkeley Square and the space now covered by Lansdowne House and garden. This latter mansion was begun for Lord Bute, then Prime Minister, whose treaty of Peace with France raised such a fury of opposition that his enemies did not hesitate to say that he had been bribed. On his fall

iron bars at its two ends were put up late in the last century, because a mounted highwayman, who had committed a robbery in Piccadilly, escaped through this passage by riding his horse down and up the steps.

North of the old Berkeley estate begins the enormously valuable property of the Duke of Westminster in this part of London, brought to the Grosvenor family by Miss Mary Davies, who married Sir Thomas Grosvenor, and died a lunatic



PAINTED MEDALLION, BY ANGELICA KAUFFMANN, ON THE CEILING OF THE BOUDOIR IN SIR JOHN LESLIE'S HOUSE. SUBJECT, "CUPID BOUND"

in 1730. And here, in Davies Street, named after her, stands Bourdon House, a pleasant old dwelling overshadowed by the trees which grow in its little courtyard. Inside there is much carved woodwork which seems to be French in style, dating, I imagine, from the early part of the eighteenth century. There is

a strong tradition that this house was originally occupied by the Davies family, it is certainly one of the oldest on the estate. The name Bourdon first appears on the parish rate-books in 1739.

Sir John Leslie, brother of the kind occupant of Bourdon House, possesses a town residence which, though of no very

great age, is an interesting specimen of architecture, and it has been preserved by him with loving care. His mansion forms the end of Stratford Place, which was built about 1775 for Edward Stratford, second Earl of Aldborough, who lived here many years, and to whom a ground lease, renewable for ever under certain conditions, was granted by the Corporation of the City of London, whose banqueting-hall had previously stood here. This and the adjoining houses were

tions of the house are the painted ceilings by Angelica Kauffmann—a series of medallions which are set, as it were, in a framework of Adam decoration. Purists may condemn the pseudo-classical style of both paintings and plaster-work, but the whole effect is eminently harmonious. These delightful productions inspired, we are told, a literary work no less delightful—the story of *Miss Angel*. In the sympathetic account of Angelica Kauffmann lately written by Miss Gerard, there is a



THE LIBRARY IN CHESTERFIELD HOUSE.

built from the designs of the Adam brothers, then the fashionable architects, to one of whom I have already referred. The outside is of stone with Ionic pilasters, and though hardly beautiful is at least of good proportion. Inside I was charmed by the staircase with its pretty cupola, its tapestries empanelled in the arched recesses, and the paintings of birds and beasts, the work of Sir John's own hand; in particular the dove's nest over a doorway with the motto, "Ad ogni uccello il suo nido e bello." But the chief attrac-

list of all her painted ceilings which are still known to exist. In London there are several, mostly painted for the Adams, to whom she was probably introduced by Zucchi, who became her very humdrum husband.

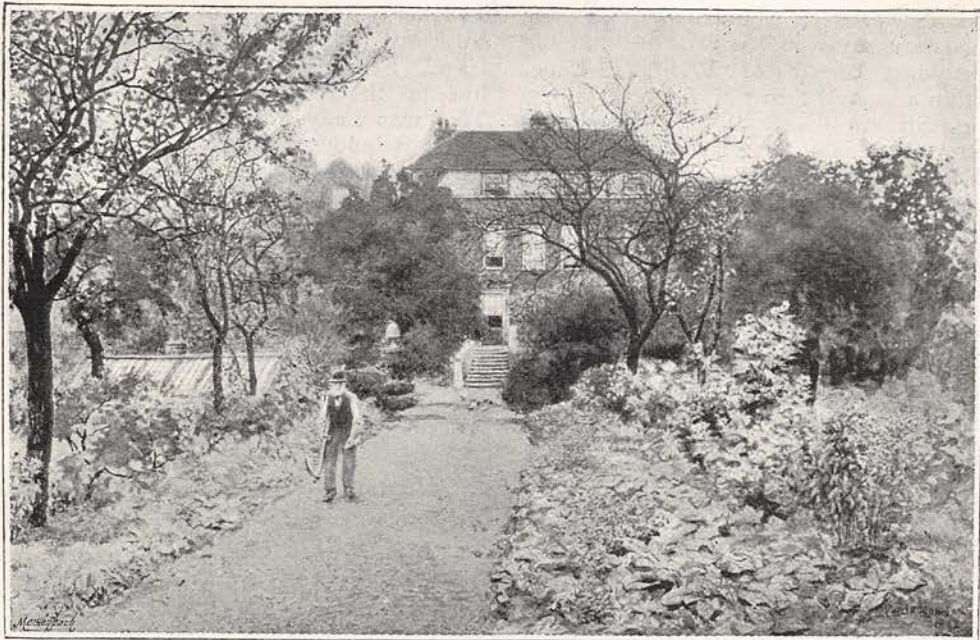
The symmetry of Stratford Place has now been destroyed by the removal of a house at the entrance. Here on each side was a small building (originally for a watchman), surmounted by a lion; the one at the south-west corner still remains. It was to the adjoining house, No. 21,

that Cosway removed on leaving Pall Mall. Though a well-made little man he appears to have been not unlike a monkey in the face; hence the ill-natured lines affixed to his door, which were attributed at the time to Peter Pindar:—

“When a man to a fair for a show brings a lion,
’Tis usual a monkey the sign-post to tie on:
But here the old custom reversed is seen,
For the Lion’s without—and the monkey’s within!”

This lampoon was too much for Cosway’s vanity, and shortly afterwards

Earl did not take possession of his new home in South Audley Street till March 13th, 1749. The ground attached to it has been sadly curtailed since he wrote to a friend, “My garden is now turfed, planted, and sown, and will in two months more make a scene of verdure and flowers not common in London.” Inside, however, there has been comparatively little change. The marble staircase with its pillars has a very stately effect; it was brought from Canons, near Edgeware, the reversed CS on the wrought iron balusters being the initials of the “princely” Chandos, whose ducal



SCARSDALE HOUSE, 1892.

he changed his quarters to No. 20 in the same street.

Whatever their defects, the noblemen’s mansions built in the eighteenth century were mostly distinguished by fine staircases and reception rooms. A notable specimen is Chesterfield House, which was planned by Ware, an architect of no mean merit, for Philip, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, who wrote the famous *Letters to his Son*. Here Samuel Johnson is popularly supposed to have “waited in the outer rooms,” and been “repulsed from the door”; but this must have occurred not later than 1747, as is clear from Johnson’s own words, and the 136. January, 1895.

coronets were removed by Lord Chesterfield and replaced by his own. On the ground floor at the back there is a splendid suite of rooms including the library, of which, by the kindness of Lord Burton, I am enabled to give an illustration. Its first owner called it with pardonable pride, “The best room in England,” and here are still to be seen under the cornice in capital letters a foot high the Horatian lines:—

“Nunc veterum libris, nunc somno et inertibus horis,
Ducere sollicitæ jucunda oblivæ vitæ,”

an indication of the life he proposed to

lead amidst his books and pictures. The portraits in framed panels which decorate the walls are a most interesting series, representing as they do eminent people painted by some of the finest artists of the last and present centuries. Scattered throughout the mansion there is a superb collection of portraits by Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney, here most appropriately housed.

An account of this sort must of necessity be scrappy and incomplete, for the material at one's disposal is ample enough to fill not an article but a volume. Before finally quitting the subject I therefore owe my readers no apology for reminding them, while its memory is yet green, of a delightful relic of "the old Court suburb." Scarsdale House stands, perhaps one must now say stood, a little back at the north-east corner of Wright's Lane, within a stone's throw of the Kensington High Street railway station. Of its early history little is known, but the main part of the building must have been at least coëval with Kensington Square, that is it must have existed for 200 years. I am told by a descendant that this property first belonged to John Curzon, who is perhaps best remembered in the family as having owned a horse of Eastern blood, one of the progenitors of the modern race-horse. For a short time Lord

Barnard occupied the house; in 1721 William Curzon was living here, and was one of the largest contributors to the parish poor-rate. Early in this century it was occupied by a ladies' boarding school, but many years ago became the residence of the Honourable Edward Curzon (second son of Mr. Robert Curzon and Lady de la Zouche), who bought it from his cousin, Lord Scarsdale. The Jacobean mantelpieces in the drawing-room once graced the historic mansion of Loseley. Those, however, who wish to see in the "mind's eye" this ideal dwelling and its then pretty surroundings as they existed a generation ago, had best not trouble themselves with dry statistics but consult Miss Thackeray, for if to the mansion in Stratford Place we partly owe *Miss Angel*, Scarsdale House must always live in the pages of *Old Kensington*. This was Lady Sarah's home "with its many windows dazzling as the sun travelled across the old-fashioned house-tops," and here was the room with the blue tiles which Lady Sarah's husband brought from the Hague the year before he died. The garden is now desolate, and before these pages appear in print Scarsdale House will have been overwhelmed by the inevitable tide of modern progress.