

Illustrated Interviews.

XXVII.—THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.



From a Photo. by]

THE MANSION HOUSE.

[Elliott & Fry.



IR STUART KNILL, BART., Lord Mayor of London, is a busy man, and when he shook hands with me in the Long Parlour, at the Mansion House, at ten o'clock one morning, he

had been up and doing some three hours previously. I had been waiting a few minutes, and was by no means the only one, so besieged is the first dignitary of the City with deputations of all sorts and descriptions. Time was evidently of value here; so, after a rapid interchange of sentences, off we start on a tour of inspection of the Mansion House and its belongings.

Certainly I am honoured by his lordship personally conducting and explaining, and just as certainly, what with listening and looking, taking mental notes, and studying the speaker, I am kept pretty busy.

We are traversing the Vesture and Reception Halls, recalling Kings, Queens, statesmen, and Lord Mayors. A fine, lofty place, of considerable dimensions, massive and rich

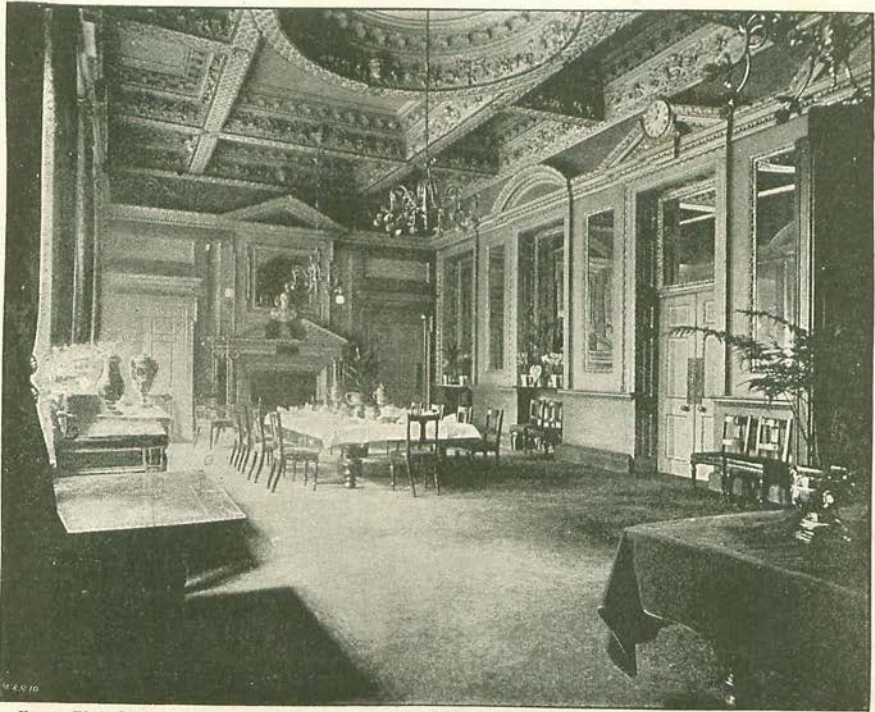
in detail: the walls are beautifully decorated with gold carving in relief of fruit and flowers, together with shields, sceptres, and other official insignia; the whole standing out bright and rich against walls of creamy hue.

Somehow all the halls of grandeur are over-shadowed with dark obscurity. Dimness seems to be respectable, and, if it were not for the aid of artificial light, it would much resemble "sitting among the tombs."

I am bewailing the darkness when, at a word from his lordship, an attentive servitor turns on the electric current, and brilliancy takes the place of obscurity: I am suddenly transported into a palace of light.

With a quick glance I note the handsome furniture of over-burnished gold and plush, the rich hangings and carpets, and costly crystal chandeliers; then we come to a sudden halt.

"Here is something that will interest you," said his lordship. "This is the China Cup given by the Volunteers in China; it was shot for



From a Photo. by]

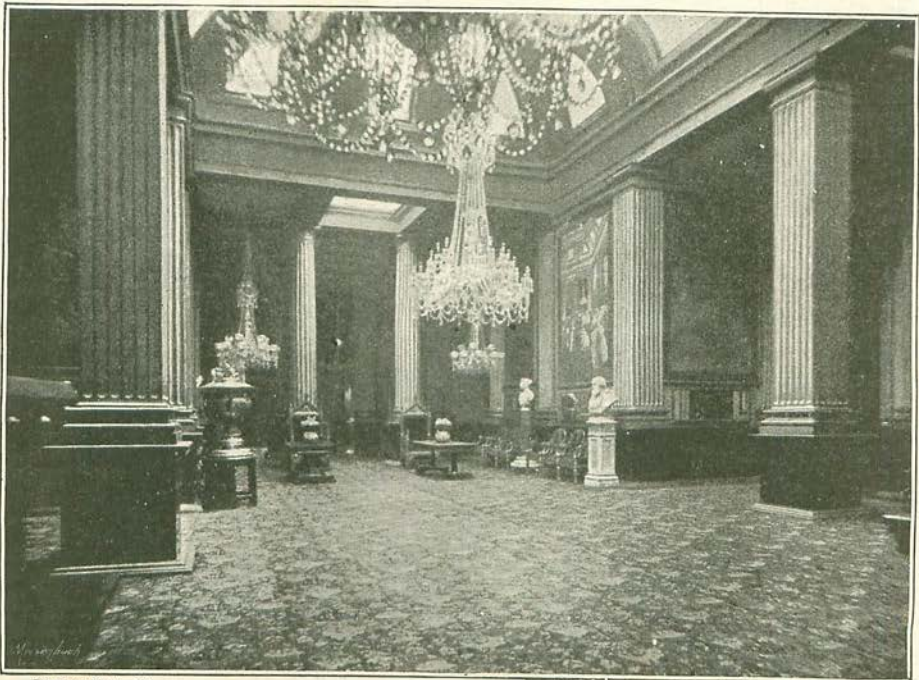
THE LONG PARLOUR.

[Elliott & Fry.

and won by the London team, and by them deposited in my care for the year."

Very handsome this cup is, also very

costly, for it is of massive silver, beautifully embossed, and surmounted with Chinese dragons.



From a Photo. by]

THE RECEPTION HALL.

[Elliott & Fry.



From a Photo. by] THE CHINA CUP. [Elliott & Fry.

Worth photographing, was my thought; accordingly, you are able to form some idea of its proportions and make. Just over this hangs a beautiful piece of tapestry, representing Queen Elizabeth opening the first Exchange, and opposite is another piece showing the visit of Queen Victoria to the Mansion House in the Jubilee year.

"These," said my courteous guide, "were the last pieces made at the Royal Windsor Tapestry Works, under the direction of the Duke of Albany."

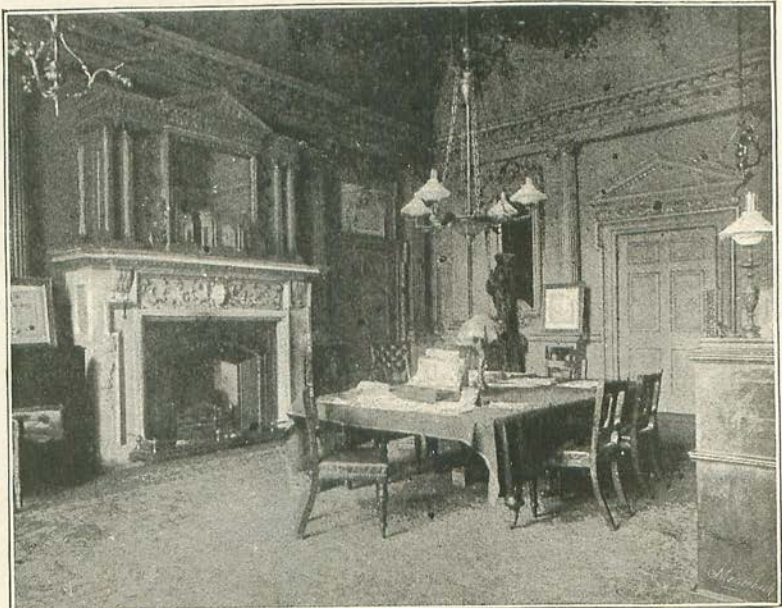
Wonderfully good these tapestries are; and it does seem a pity

this sort of work is almost obsolete. The piece depicting Her Majesty visiting this place shows such perfect likenesses of each of the group, that at a little distance one might easily mistake it for a work in oils. A few busts are noticeable here: Queen Victoria and the lamented Prince Consort, King George IV., and the Marquis of Salisbury, the latter presented by the Corporation in 1888.

In this hall, I was informed, the Lord Mayor receives his guests on great occasions; it reaches right away to the Egyptian Hall; but before proceeding to investigate that place, I am shown two or three rooms of interest near to hand. Entering one on the right, we are curiously gazed upon by some workmen who are busily engaged at the far end.

"My business room," said the Lord Mayor, "but I am turned out just now, while these men are putting in a new window."

This room is called the Venetian Parlour. It is plainly but substantially furnished: containing, amongst other things, a number of framed testimonials and congratulations, presented to his lordship on his election, by different companies and societies. Evidently, here is a man liked and respected by all who have had dealings with him. I make no attempt here to discuss the reasons brought forward by a certain faction, that should cause Sir Stuart Knill to be passed over for election to civic honours. It was a sort of "storm in a teapot"; the Right Honourable went into



From a Photo. by]

THE VENETIAN PARLOUR.

[Elliott & Fry.



From a Photo. by]

MASTER STUART KNILL.

[H. Wayland, Blackheath.

sake, but actually his birthday is of corresponding date to that of his grandfather, and having arrived at the dignity of seven years, he has had his likeness taken for "a birthday present to his dear grandpa."

Mrs. John Knill comes in at this juncture, and after an introduction tells me all about her boy, with all a mother's pride in the bonnie face and winsome ways of the child whose life many a time had been despaired of, but who was now as healthy and hearty as one could wish. They all thought it would be capital to have him portrayed in his grandfather's robe, cocked hat, etc.; the boy was as proud as possible. Accordingly, Mr. H. Wayland, of Blackheath, took him with happy effect, and here you have the reproduction.

Perhaps some day Stuart, junr., will wear the civic insignia in reality; let us hope that he will wear it as worthily as his grandfather.

Here we stand talking a few minutes, then proceed together to the secretary's room, or the "Hive" as Mr. Soulsby

office with a big majority, and the City has a chief of upright fearlessness of character, and of unswerving integrity in all his actions, as well as a right benevolent gentleman, a free-handed entertainer, and supporter of all the ancient dignities of office.

Still later, an accusation of want of loyalty has been brought. Now, I have had more than one opportunity of conversing with Lord Mayor Knill and his family, and I venture to say no more loyal man than he holds office in this country, and no one who would more readily serve his Queen in any emergency. With each member of the family the warmest fealty to the throne is manifest, expressed in no empty words, but evidently the language of the heart.

There is one thing in this room I must not overlook, because it is held to be of very great importance in the Mansion House family: it is a large framed portrait of the only grandson, Master Stuart Knill. Not only is he a name-

calls it. This gentleman, I must tell you, is a fixture, and seems quite as much a part of the Mansion House as is the Corporation plate. It's a case of "Lord Mayors may come, Lord Mayors may go, but I stay on for ever." And well it is that such is the case, for the business of this place is like a complicated piece of mechanism, requiring practice as well as tact to keep it going. Perfect piles of correspondence cover the centre table: curious, too, some of it! If ever a man was beset with office and situation hunters, and inundated with begging letters—to say nothing of requests, both strange and amusing—it is the Lord Mayor of London. The great army of the unemployed of every grade, from a bank manager down to a messenger, from a director to a caretaker, each and every one thinks his lordship can find him a situation, and put him in it. It would, indeed, be an undertaking and a responsi-



From a Photo. by]

THE SECRETARY'S ROOM.

[Elliott & Fry.

bility for any man, especially as he knows nothing of their characters. And the begging letters! They are sufficiently numerous to quickly make a rich man a poor one, if the writers were helped as they desire. The compulsory refusal is evidently *not* one of the sweets of office to a man as kind-hearted as Sir Stuart Knill. That he *does* give, and gives largely, regardless of creed or any other matter, I know for a fact; but wherever it is possible the gift is bestowed quietly.

Now we turn to the letters, which contain some very peculiar and amusing requests. What would you think of turning the Mansion House into a matrimonial agency, with the Lord Mayor as managing director? Sounds queer, does it not? Yet one young settler out in Canada, tired of single blessedness and sighing for the married state, actually hit upon London's Lord Mayor as a suitable person to help him to a wife. Needless to say, the "agency" was not accepted.

Then, again, a Continental tradesman has an idea of turning the place into a market, with his lordship as chief salesman; for he sends over a large case of goods, asking that they may be sold on his behalf!

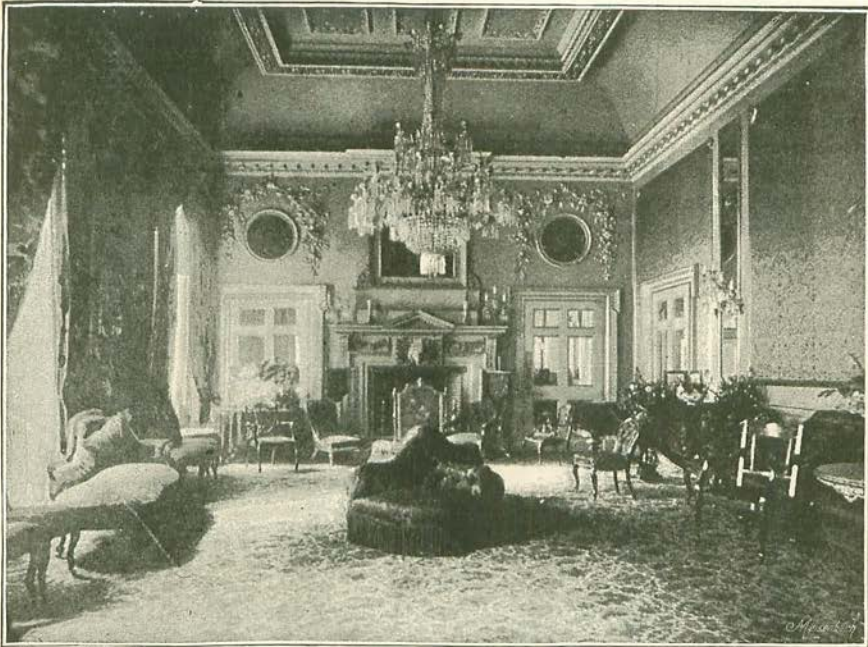
Another petition, of a different sort, met with more favourable consideration: it was that of a boy who had gone from an industrial school out to Montreal. He had left behind him three brothers, to whom he had since written, but his letters had been returned with "gone away" on the envelopes. The

lad's letter was given into the hands of the City Commissioner, and after some considerable trouble all three were found living in different parts of London, and placed in communication with the brother in foreign lands. This is only one of frequent cases where the Mansion House aid is besought for the finding of lost friends, happy results often following.

Mr. Soulsby is depicted here, as

you may find him at any time, deep in his duties; and when one thinks of the numerous dinners, balls, receptions, deputations, funds, and the other hundred and one matters that he has to attend to, I make up my mind that the office he has so successfully filled for upwards of eighteen years is no sinecure. Mr. Soulsby it was who called my attention to the very beautiful marble chimney-piece in this room. It is of pure Sicilian marble, exquisitely sculptured in fruit and flowers, the top supports being Corinthian columns, the lower having continuation of Corinthian character; while running around the fireplace is an exquisitely carved frieze.

As we emerge into the corridor, the entrance to the Justice Room faces us: but, as the Lord Mayor sits there later on, we leave that for the present, and proceed to the State Drawing Rooms. These two rooms are spanned mid-way with a lofty arch. Several doors in them communicate with other rooms, and each one being panelled in plate glass adds greatly to the grand effect. The prevailing tints of ceiling and walls are cream and gold, the latter being silk panelled. Here, as in the majority of the Mansion House rooms, gold carving of fruit and flowers in relief is a special feature. The marble chimney-pieces are very fine, as are also the crystal chandeliers and numerous candelabra. In one room the furniture is of walnut, upholstered with grey silk; in the



From a Photo. by]

THE STATE DRAWING-ROOM.

[Elliott & Fry.

other the frames are over-burnished, with upholstery of gold silk.

"Here," explained his lordship, "the Lady Mayoress holds her receptions, which are generally very largely attended. The rooms are, of course, also open on all occasions when guests are here."

I remember then that the receptions are musical, and glance over at the fine "grand" in the corner, with three or four music-stands in its neighbourhood. Subsequently I had the pleasure of attending one of these receptions. Very enjoyable it was too, but would have been much more so if a part of the four hundred odd people who came had but left a little sooner; but, no, there they stayed; while cups of tea went briskly round, music never flagged, conversation was general, and we all got wedged into groups or corners; felt generally warm and uncomfortable; but smiled at each other as though we had reached the highest state of blissful existence.

To return, however. There is to be a banquet to-night, and cut flowers and corns are being placed here and there, brightening up the rooms that, though grand and stately, yet are stiff and formal.

We now pass out by the doorway at the upper end of the drawing-rooms; this bringing us to the top of the Grand Reception Hall. Here we pause, and looking down, note the massive supporting columns, and the stately

Vol. vi.—48.

proportions of the whole—seen here to the greatest advantage.

It is natural to think and speak here of the stately ceremonies, and of the illustrious visitors, long since faded into the shadows of the past, and to recall times when the Lord Mayors of London held an office of a somewhat different nature to what they do now.

For instance: he is in no danger of Her Majesty sending him to prison because he has not squeezed enough money out of the citizens to satisfy her demands; his predecessors of ancient times were! Then, again, he is suitably and handsomely lodged, whereas aforesaid he had to borrow a company's hall, hire a house, or put up with what he had got; the latter, of course, being generally much too small for the duties of his position.

In 1739 the City thought the time had arrived for an official residence, and the foundation stone was laid by Lord Mayor Pery, the opening taking place amid much rejoicing on the part of the citizens in 1753. It is built of Portland stone, its exterior doubtless being familiar to most of my readers. I may here say that the bills for house and furniture amounted to £70,985 13s. 2d.; the plate costing £11,531 16s. 3d. It is now of much greater value, as each Lord Mayor adds about £500 worth.

The first Mayor was elected by Richard I. in 1189, but the prefix of Lord, with style of

Right Honourable, was not granted until 1354, by Edward III.

There is a sort of magnet about the words "Mansion House," and, generally speaking, a vast amount of respect for the occupants who come and go year by year. The fact of it is, in the elevation and dignity of the Lord Mayor, City men behold theirs, for he is one of them. So, despite of much talking of doing away with the annual show, we still steadily vote ourselves a holiday; don all our best attire; and, emptying our warehouses and shop windows of their usual adornments, we fill them with happy families; and generally agree that it is a good old institution that ought to be kept up.

I should imagine that it would be difficult to find a more responsible and hard-working post than that of Lord Mayor. To take but brief cognizance of the different duties for one year would be a prodigious task, so numerous and so wide is the extent. He is a Judge of the Central Criminal Court and London Sessions, presides at the Court of Aldermen, as well as at a legion of public meetings at the Mansion House and elsewhere. He receives numbers of distinguished foreign visitors, and has frequent communications with the Government as the City representative.

Should there be a change of monarchy, he must attend the Privy Council, and act as Chief Butler at the coronation. He is connected with more schools, hospitals, and societies than I can say; and any national or foreign calamity that occurs, he is the acting and willing medium for public subscriptions. He also sits daily in the Mansion House justice-room, where he tries prisoners and arbitrates in private causes, besides attending dinners, concerts, and balls innumerable.

All this makes up a sum total of engagements, that it is a wonder how any one man can go through with them.

This year, it certainly seems to be the right man in the right place. A tall, keen-eyed, grey-haired man, practical and business-like; evidently thoughtful and quietly shrewd; and, above all, evincing an innate courtesy and kindness of manner that win the respect of all.

A portrait and brief biography of the Lord Mayor was published in THE STRAND MAGAZINE for January of this year; and while penning these lines, the tidings reach me that Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to confer upon him a Baronetage, so I take the opportunity of asking my readers to join in hearty congratulations to Sir Stuart Knill and family.

Before passing through the large doorway, immediately near us, we proceed to note the two gigantic and finely sculptured pieces of Sardanapalus and Caractacus, by Weekes and Foley respectively; having done which,



SIR STUART KNILL, BART., LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.
From a Photo. by the London Stereoscopic Co.



THE LADY MAYORESS.
From a Photo. by Elliott & Fry.

we enter the Egyptian Hall, a place of noble proportions, designed by Lord Burlington.

"This hall," said his lordship, "as you probably know, is used for banquets, public meetings, and the Lord Mayor's Ball. At the banquets the Lord Mayor's seat is on a dais facing the doors; about four hundred can dine here, the tables being

above these being two magnificent stained-glass windows, one showing a street procession of Edward VI., the other a water procession of Queen Elizabeth. On either side of the room, in rear of the pillars, are some grand specimens of sculptured statuary, all wrought by illustrious men; these were purchased by the Corporation after the Exhibition of 1851, at a cost of £10,000.



From a Photo. by]

THE BANQUET TABLES IN THE EGYPTIAN HALL.

[Elliott & Fry.

placed round three sides, and in rows across the centre."

Later on, I was a privileged spectator of a banquet given in honour of M. Waddington; a brilliant spectacle it was, and right well was the dignity of our ancient City maintained by Sir Stuart Knill. On that occasion a sketch was taken of the table before the company sat down, which will give some idea of the effective tableau presented later on.

This Egyptian Hall is worth inspecting in detail, and we walk leisurely around it, noting and chatting. Two rows of lofty, detached pillars stand out on either side; from the vaulted roof hang some gay banners of former Lord Mayors, prominent being the one of the gentleman now conversing with me. At either end are immense plate-glass mirrors reflecting back the whole of the interior;

Over the entrance is a horse-shoe balcony, where the privileged few may look on at the stately functions proceeding below. We could mentally recall several of unusual splendour: one, for instance, when the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV., was entertained in 1814. £20,000 was the sum then expended! Or, one still longer ago, when the far-famed Whittington entertained Henry V. and Queen Catherine. Whittington was a right liberal host; but the crowning point was after the banquet, when King, Queen, and Mayor stood in front of a fire made with precious woods mixed with spices. Conversation turned on money matters, the Mayor having lent the King immense sums of money wherewith to carry on the siege of Harfleur. Small wonder that the monarchs were astonished when Whittington took the bonds for such moneys

and calmly con-
signed them to the
flames, the King
giving utterance to
his feelings with—

“Surely, never
had King such a
subject!”

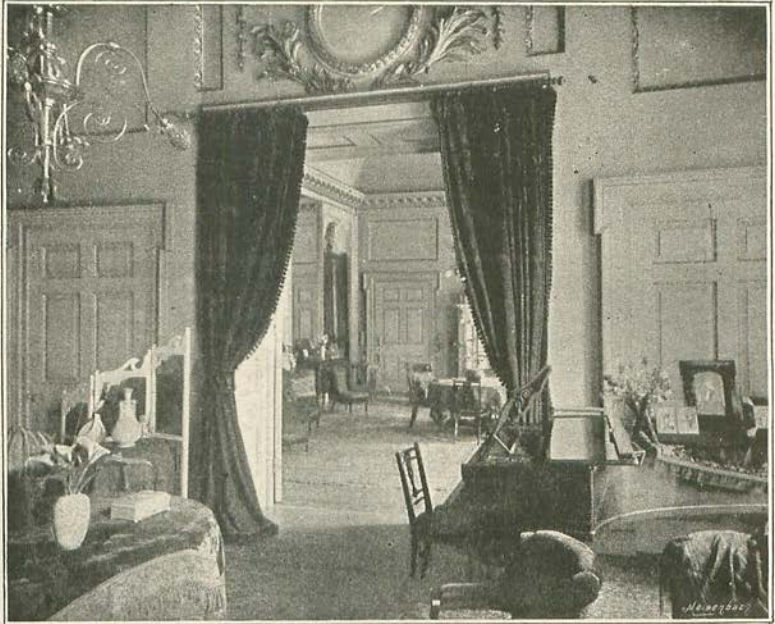
To which the
right loyal enter-
tainer replied, as
he bowed low with
courtly gallantry:—

“Surely, sire,
never had subject
such a King!”

If the days of
swelling the mon-
arch's purse have
gone by, the days
of costly banquets
are with us still;
of which the annual
one on the 9th of
November is no

mean example, the cost of that being com-
puted at about £3,000, the Lord Mayor pay-
ing half, and the two Sheriffs a fourth each.

Here we leave banquet subjects and Ban-
queting Hall, and go up the staircase
opening from the grand reception hall, and
exactly opposite the one leading from the



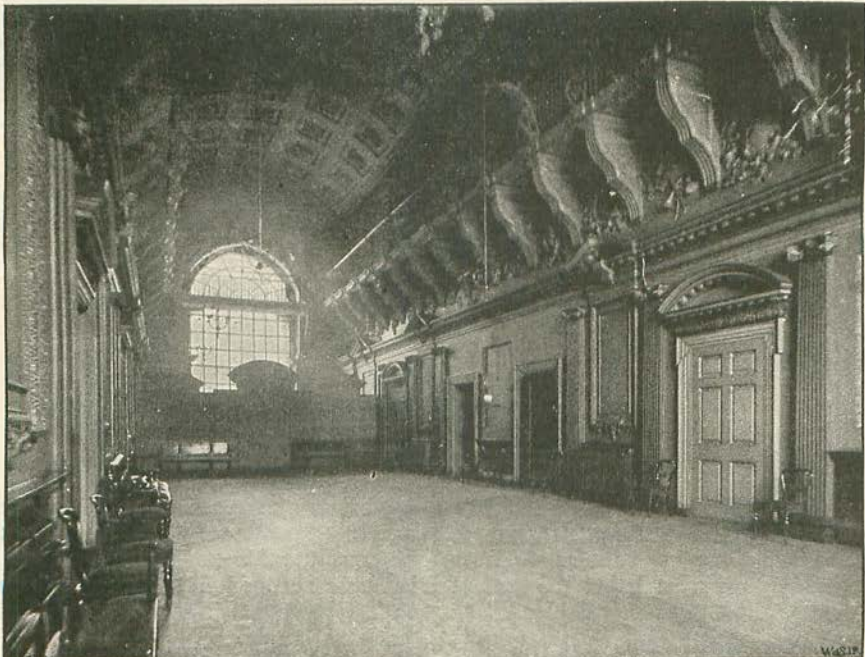
From a Photo. by]

THE MORNING ROOMS.

[Elliott & Fry.

lower hall. The same beautiful designs are
here continued on ceiling and wall, together
with a profusion of floral decoration in
windows and lobbies.

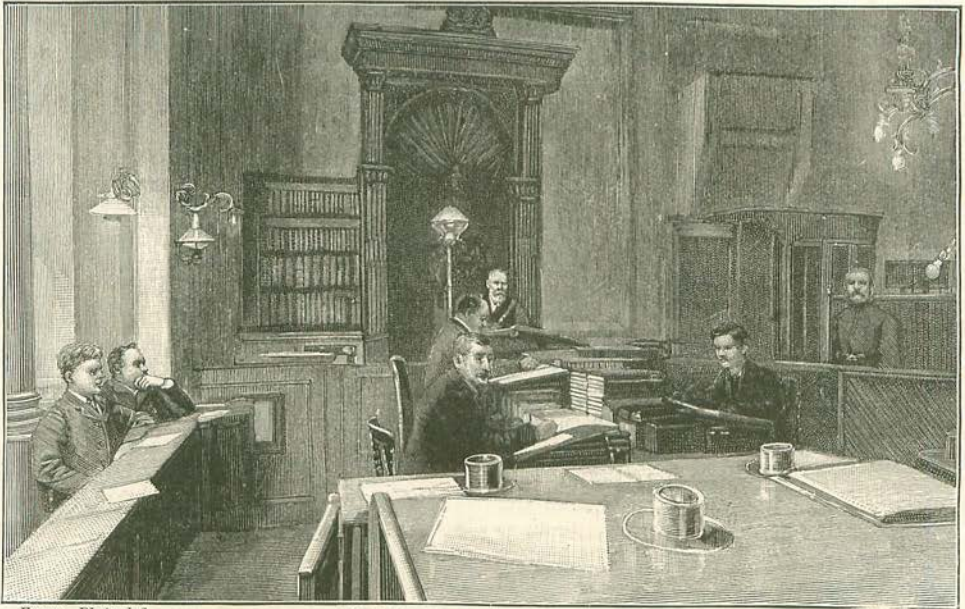
Just at the top are two morning rooms,
these being furnished in walnut and gold,
with hangings of rich plush, and decorated



From a Photo. by]

THE OLD BALL-ROOM.

[Elliott & Fry.



From a Photo. by]

THE MANSION HOUSE JUSTICE-ROOM.

[Elliott & Fry.

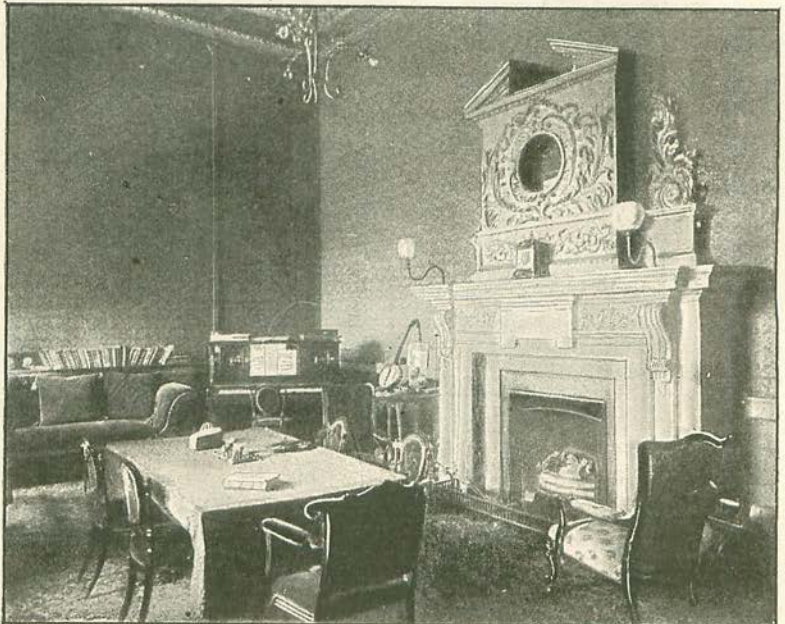
in cream and gold; the doors have plate-glass panels, the chimney-pieces are handsome and artistic, over one being a fine sculptured bust of Her Majesty the Queen. Birds in their cages are singing their sweetest, revelling in the bright sunshine streaming in at the windows. Music is scattered here and there; one of Erard's superb "grands" standing in an inviting position. Altogether, these rooms have a very attractive appearance.

Next, my Lord Mayor conducted me to the old ball-room. Here, he explained, many of the City Companies hold their "dinners," on the walls being displayed their shields and devices. The prevailing tone of the decorations are pale green, cream, and gold. A light gallery runs round the room, from which gallery open a number of bedrooms.

At one end of the room a screen reaches right across and on looking behind we find

the flooring replaced with glass, this device, his lordship informed me, having been resorted to in order that more light could be introduced to the Justice Room, which is immediately below; this glass can be covered at will, thus bringing the room to its former size when requisite.

The billiard-room is contiguous to this, a pleasant room, decorated in terra-cotta, and fitted with handsome and comfortable



From a Photo. by]

THE SMOKING-ROOM.

[Elliott & Fry.

appointments. Then we visit a snug smoking den, a cosy little spot where his lordship can enjoy his weed, and keep, as he tells me, the smoke smell from the downstairs rooms.

But time is passing; the hour for the Justice Room approaches; so we hasten to the boudoir of the Lady Mayoress, to whom I am now introduced. A few pleasant words are addressed to me, a promise of a chat later on, and I hurry downstairs to see the Chief Magistrate take his seat in the court. First, a likeness is taken, consent being kindly accorded; so here you see the Lord Mayor occupying the seat of Justice, Mr. Douglas, Clerk of the Court, in his accustomed position, and various other officials in theirs. I stay for one or two cases, having thus an opportunity of listening to reproof and advice from the chair, and a sample of legal argument; then I wander off to the lower regions; inspect the plate-room, with its store of costly and elaborate pieces; the kitchens, where I find huge joints roasting in rows for the coming banquet, together with a plentiful supply of all the other accessories requisite for a Mansion House dinner.

so hospitable a man as Sir Stuart Knill. It scarcely needs my assurance of the perfection of hospitality which I, as well as others, received here; all that may be taken for granted.

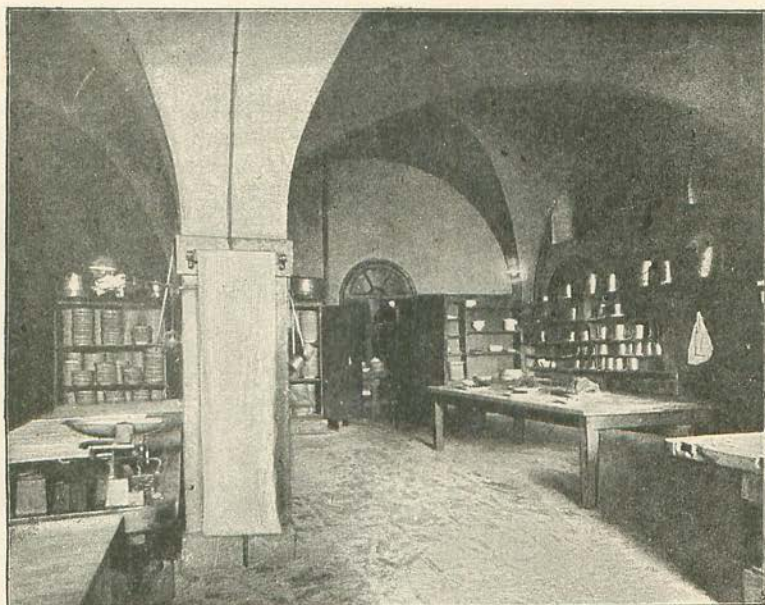
Later in the day, I had my promised interview with the Lady Mayoress; three of us—the extra one being Mrs. John Knill—settling down for a cosy talk, which proved so full of interest that the large hand of the timepiece travelled nearly twice round ere the good-bye was spoken. It was a charming room in which we sat, looking more like "home" than any room in the house.

A plentiful supply of music and books, lots of albums and framed portraits—presents of all sorts.

"People have been very kind," said the Lady Mayoress; "in fact, we have received so many things that I am wondering where we shall put them all when we leave here."

Then I found that although of necessity much time must be passed at the civic residence, yet the house at Blackheath was the favoured spot.

"Sunshine and fresh air, and a quiet country life," said my hostess, "I enjoy; and



From a Photo. by

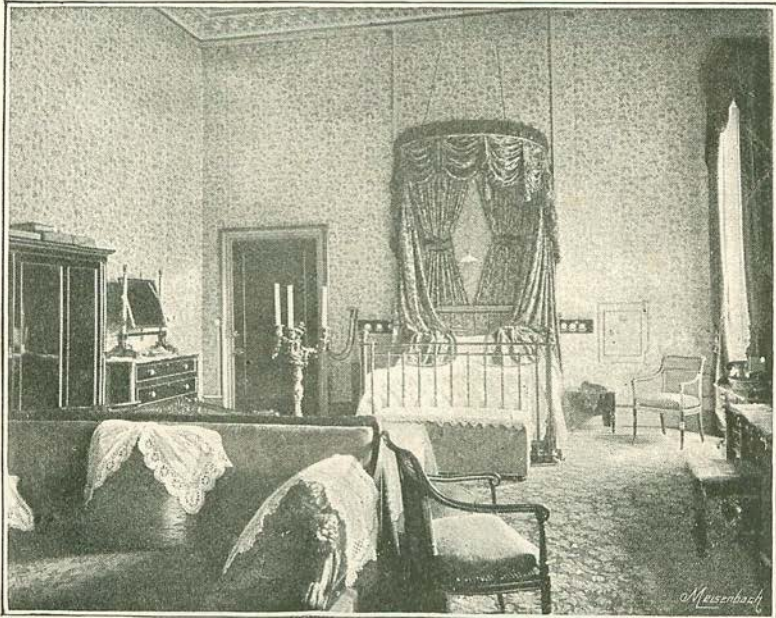
THE KITCHEN.

[Elliott & Fry.]

Then, under the experienced guidance of Mr. Winny, the butler of nearly eleven years' standing, I explore the wine cellars—capacious and numerous; hear how many hundred dozen a good Lord Mayor will consume in his year, and inwardly wonder whether the salary of £10,000 will pay even half the expenses of

here we are so shut in, the rooms are dark, and yet so large that you scarcely catch a voice from the other end of one."

And so we went on to talk of the many and varied duties that devolve on the Lady Mayoress; many of them enjoyable, but the multiplicity making them very tiring.



From a Photo. by]

STATE BEDROOM.

[Elliott & Fry.

"Very kind of the people to ask us," said her ladyship, "but—yes—it *is* somewhat wearying: the continual round of 'at homes,' receptions, balls, etc., to say nothing of the large number of charitable, scholastic, and other good works in which we must take part."

From this we drifted into the needs and sufferings of the vast legion of the London poor. How much sympathy with and how much anxiety to help was shown by these ladies I cannot describe to you; regardless of creed, they would like to help all in need; but how many applications were received for assistance it was difficult for them to say.

"How do you treat these letters?" I asked; and was told in answer that as many as possible were answered in some way, as, "If you cannot help a person, it is only right and kind to put them out of suspense." It is evidently the middle-class people who have most of the sympathy of the Mansion House mistress, though; "for," said she, "when poverty overtakes *them*, they feel it more than those who have been brought up in a harder school; besides, there is more done for the latter; the outcast can take refuge in the workhouse or shelter if no other place is open to him, while the more gently nurtured shrink from it."

Then I listened with interest to an account of a Catholic Women's Shelter in the City,

and a recital of facts gathered in personal visits to the place.

Literature was the next topic, and here I found myself in contact with two minds well stored with the works of the best writers; and minds that deplored the vast amount of light and unprofitable reading indulged in by so many at the present time.

This led to a practical remark from the Lady Mayoress, which would be well for the future of Young England if acted upon. "Why is it," she said, "that our boys are not well grounded in French and German, instead of the smattering of sciences and 'ologies that is so prevalent? See how necessary it is in mercantile houses at the present time: is it any wonder that foreigners come over and secure clerkships, while hundreds of Englishmen and lads are either out of employment, or working for a mere pittance in inferior positions?"

Sound reasoning this, and, coming from the wife of a thorough business man, it is not speaking of matters she does not understand.

I should think the sound common sense of the wife in this case would be invaluable to the husband; and if one can read at all, this is just the sort of family where a bond of mutual help, as well as mutual affection, exists.

Singularly happy is the Lady Mayoress in having a daughter-in-law who can so ably fill her place or second her in her duties, as

can Mrs. John Knill. These duties have, in fact, often to devolve upon her entirely, as her ladyship—no longer young, and anything but robust—often finds rest absolutely necessary.

A photo. is taken of the boudoir and one of the State bedrooms, which Mrs. Knill points out to me. In the former I am happy in having persuaded the Lady Mayoress to sit, though, as she tells me, "she has a rooted objection to anything of the sort." And so we chatted, presently turning to the large amount of curiosity displayed by the people whenever a public appearance of the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress is made, and the sometimes amusing experiences in consequence.

I had heard—and repeated it—of a countryman and his wife up to see the sights. They evidently had peculiar ideas of the Lord Mayor's functions or the use of his residence, for they were discovered gazing anxiously through the massive iron bars fixed in the lower front of the Mansion House; and when asked the reason, the old man replied that "he and his missis were up to see the soights, and so thought they might see the Lord Mayor: What toime do it begin?" evidently imagining it was either a circus or a menagerie, with the Lord Mayor as M.C. What a hearty laugh this was greeted with, and the natural kindness peeped out when Lady Knill remarked, "Poor things, if that is true, what a pity they could not come and see inside."



From a Photo. by]

THE LADY MAYORESS' BOUDOIR.

[Elliott & Fry.