

## Illustrated Interviews.

No. XXXVII.—LORD AND LADY BRASSEY.

By M. GRIFFITH.



ARK LANE is the most aggressively aristocratic spot in London. The very houses have an insolent air of not being compelled to keep up appearances, or to ape the vulgar uniformity of modern structures. The architecture is delightfully erratic, and belongs to no known style.

Some of the houses are low, some high, some bay-windowed and gay with flowers; others have hideous verandas; some face the road and the park, others turn their backs on it, while a few compromise matters by giving only a side view to the passers-by. In one part several houses are clustered closely together as if anxious to take up as little room as possible, with often a small bijoux residence tightly sandwiched between two gaunt sombre ones. Some have lawns or gardens, with massive iron gates; others shabby little doors, which look as if they were never meant to open, and are guiltless of bell or knocker.

The numbering has been done upon the same chaotic principle. You will find, say, No. 7, and naturally expect that No. 8 will come next. Nothing of the kind; the next is 16, and No. 8 will probably be in some other street. The eminently respectable police who patrol Park Lane have evidently given up the problem of solving these trifling eccentricities, for if a puzzled stranger were to question one of them on the subject, he would doubtless reply,

Vol. viii —69.

"I am not sure," and—with a comprehensive wave of his white gloved hand—"but it ought to be somewhere 'ere's about." So it ought; but, alas! experience has taught us that "it is the unexpected that always happens."

I was not a stranger to the little complexities of this haunt of the moneyed great, so on one of the about seven tropical days which constitute an English summer, I leisurely wended my way to 24, Park Lane, to see Lord and Lady Brassey, and to gather material for an article for THE STRAND MAGAZINE. What a relief to enter that cool hall, with its walls hidden by trophies and arms of all kinds, and the wide, crimson-covered staircase, at the top of which a recumbent statue gleamed ivory-white against a background of growing plants.

Lady Brassey's private rooms are on the second floor, reached by the lift. I was ushered into the boudoir, and graciously

received by the fair *châtelaine*, a tall, handsome woman of stately presence, with a very winning smile. Lady Sybil de Vere Brassey—as her full name runs—is the youngest daughter of the late Viscount Malden, granddaughter of the late Earl of Essex, and sister of the present Earl. Her father—she informed me—died before succeeding to the title. So she never lived in her beautiful ancestral home, Cassiobury Park, Hertfordshire.

Lady Brassey was married in 1890, and has one dear little girl, the Hon. Helen de Vere Brassey. In the course of



From a Photo. by]

LORD BRASSEY.

[Elliott & Fry.



From a Photo. by

LADY BRASSEY.

[Alice Hughes, Gower St.

conversation, I learnt that before her marriage she lived very quietly, had travelled but little, that her uneventful home-life had developed a great taste for reading, and that she was an enthusiast about sculpture, a great walker, an accomplished horsewoman, and very fond of punting.

"After my marriage," Lady Brassey said, "we went for a six weeks' cruise in the *Sunbeam*, visiting Spain and Italy."

In reply to my question if she was a good sailor, she smiled and said, "Not at first, but now I am getting better, and am beginning to enjoy it."

The next voyage was in the following spring. A visit was paid to the Gulf of Spezzia, where Lord Brassey has large interests in lead-smelting works.

"On the 1st of January, 1893," Lady Brassey continued, "we set sail for the West Indies. We had a large party of guests on board, including my relatives, the Duke and Duchess of St. Albans, Lady Dorothea

Murray, Mr. Spencer Lyttleton, and Major Seymour Finch. In going out we had very rough weather; we were only away about three months."

"I described the *Sunbeam* some three years ago," I said; "are her decorations still the same?"

"She was rearranged and refitted," Lady Brassey replied, "so as to be in readiness for a voyage to India, where we went last year. The photograph I have given you of the yacht was taken in Calcutta. You see the native boats round her."

The *Sunbeam* was in Calcutta for about two months when Lord Brassey was President of the Royal Commission on Opium. They stayed over Christmas there, entertaining a great many friends on board. The *Sunbeam* was then sent to Bombay, where Lord and Lady Brassey rejoined her.

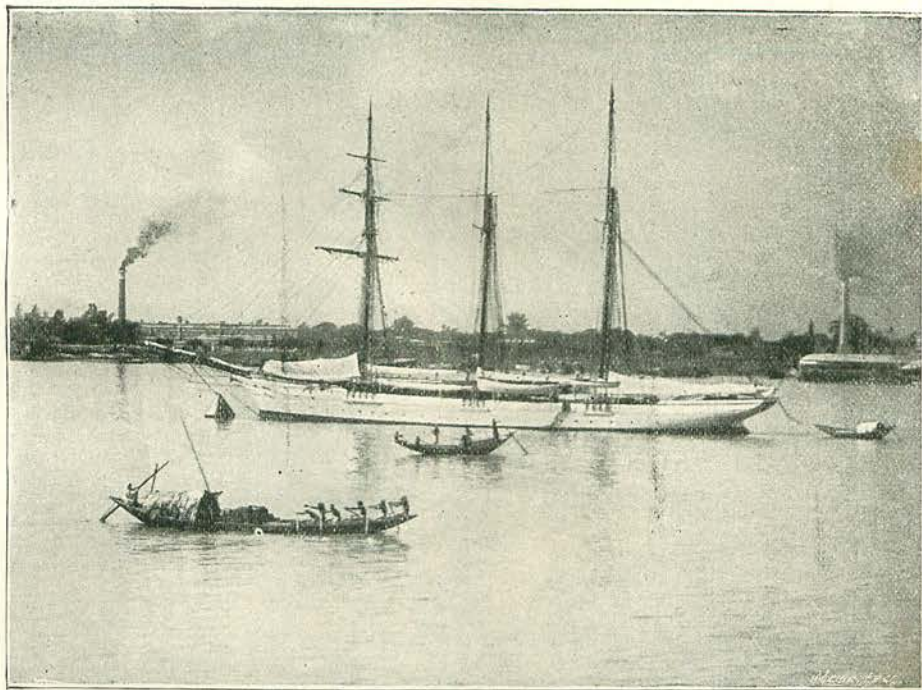
The deck-house is the most frequently occupied of all the cabins, being used as a drawing-room. I also give an illustration of the dining saloon, with the table laid. The walls are of chintz, covered with choice water-colour drawings. The paint is white, relieved with gold, and the mirrors are surrounded with lattice-work upon which ivy is twisted. The mast, which is in one corner of the room, is also twisted with it. The table swings on gimbals. In Lady

Brassey's cabin the walls are covered with chintz, and the fittings, including book-



HON. HELEN DE VERE BRASSEY.

From a Photo. by George Glanville, Tunbridge Wells.



From a]

THE "SUNBEAM."—TAKEN IN CALCUTTA.

[Photograph.

shelves and wardrobes, are of ebony, and many choice water-colours adorn the walls.

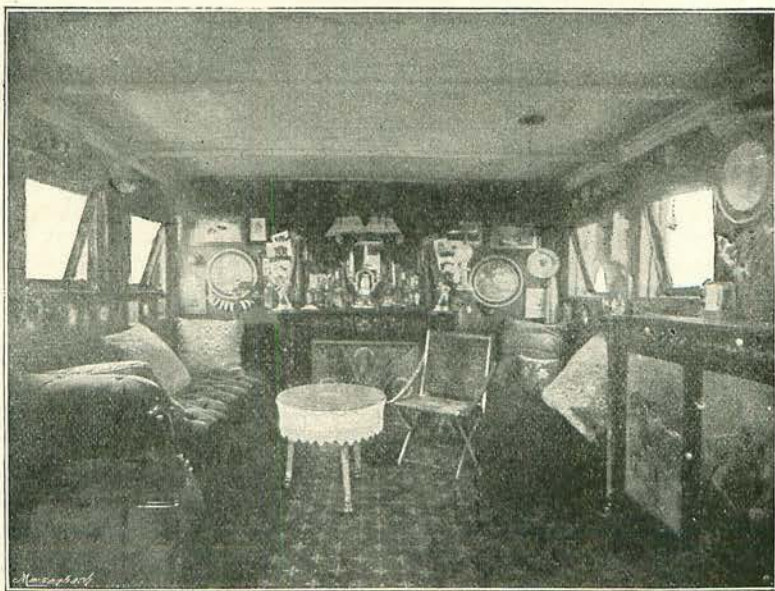
All the cabins on the *Sunbeam* are beautifully fitted and arranged, and but for the size one could imagine oneself in a splendidly furnished house.

"Are you fond of hunting?" was my next question.

"Yes, very; and so is Lord Brassey, and we keep horses at Leighton for that purpose. We spend the autumn at Normanhurst Court, the season in town, and I generally go to Scotland for about six weeks every year."

Lady Brassey has a horror of publicity, and it was only by occasional remarks that I was able to learn a little more of her life outside society circles. For instance, that during the pressure of the

London season, with all its attendant gaieties and consequent fatigue, the dinner parties, balls, and fortnightly musical reunions at which she has to enact the hostess, she still finds time and inclination for benefiting and personally visiting the poor and suffering. She has founded a convalescent home for children at Bexhill, Sussex, and is a frequent and



From a]

DECK-HOUSE.—"SUNBEAM."

[Photograph.



From a

LADY BRASSEY'S CABIN.—"SUNBEAM."

[Photograph.]

welcome visitor at the Seamen's Hospital near the Victoria and Albert Docks, with which Lord Brassey is also associated.

"Is not that rather far for you to go?" I asked.

"Yes, but no one else will go on that account," replied Lady Brassey.

I also learnt that she was on the Committee of the Mayfair Union for the Rescue of Young Girls.

My attention was attracted by a beautiful Dachshund, named "Gräfin" (Countess).

"I am very fond of dogs," Lady Brassey said, "and have always two or three about me; but this one is my favourite."

"Gräfin" evidently was fully aware of the fact, for she took both admiration and caresses quite as a matter of course.

During a temporary interruption of our conversation, I tried to take a mental picture of the boudoir, but utterly failed. I remember that it was a long room divided by arches and pillars, with chintz-covered furniture and walls rich with lovely Eastern fabrics and draperies, many palms, and flowers and priceless objects of all kinds, gathered from many lands. The writing-table at which Lady Brassey was seated had the top covered with photographs, and it was

furnished with all the dainty appliances which make writing a pleasure, yet withal it bore an appearance of being used for a great deal of systematic and serious work. I may add that the room was most harmonious in colouring and arrangement; no one object thrust itself upon you—it was not as if furnished to order, but a reflex in many ways of the tastes of the owner. If I had the necessary space I would describe the ball-room at Park Lane, with its parquet flooring; the two drawing-rooms—the one red, the other yellow—the curtains of which are of Eastern material, gorgeously embroidered; the smoking-room, with china-decorated walls on a red background, and door and ceiling painted in Moorish style. In the dining-room are several large paintings, all modern, and all by English artists, including, among many others, "A Calm Day on the Scheldt" and "The Goodwin Sands," by E. W. Cooke, R.A.; "Grassmere," by Copley Fielding; "Ripening Sunbeams," by Vicat Cole, R.A.; "The Woodland Mirror," by R. Redgrave, R.A.; "On the Road to Mentone," by Cecil Lawson; and "Gibraltar," by Keeley Halswelle.

Lord Brassey's study is green-walled, with painted ceiling, the furniture is of light oak



From a]

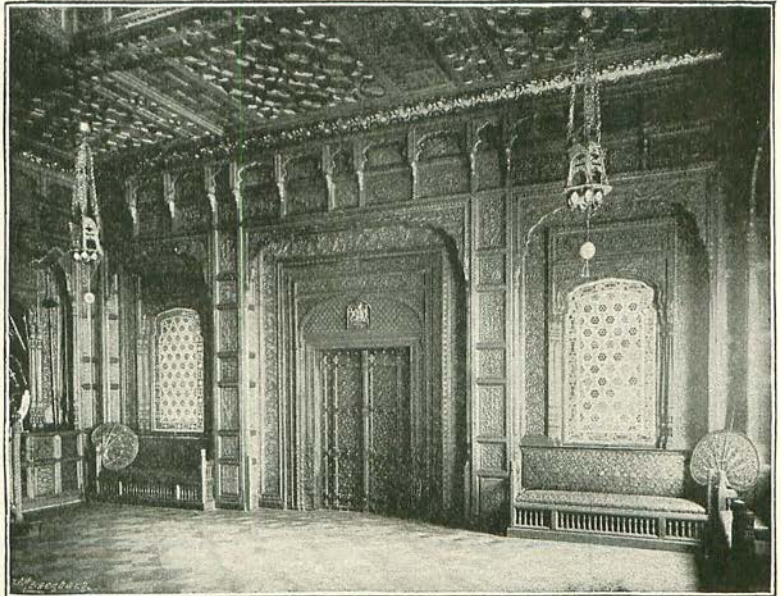
SALOON, WITH TABLE LAID FOR LUNCH.—"SUNBEAM."

[Photograph.

inlaid with black, and covered with peacock-green leather. It is not necessary to describe the owner; that strong but benevolent face, and the genial, kindly manner, are well known not only in political, naval, and social circles, but everywhere where a cheering word can encourage, or wealth succour, if the cause be good.

Lord Brassey was born at Stafford, in 1836, where his father, the late Mr. Thomas Brassey, was living temporarily while superintending some important railway contracts. The first school that he went to was at Dieppe, during the construction of the Rouen and Dieppe Railway. He was afterwards sent to Temple Grove, East Sheen, then to Rugby, and finally to University College, Oxford. He is an Hon. D.C.L. and M.A. It is im-

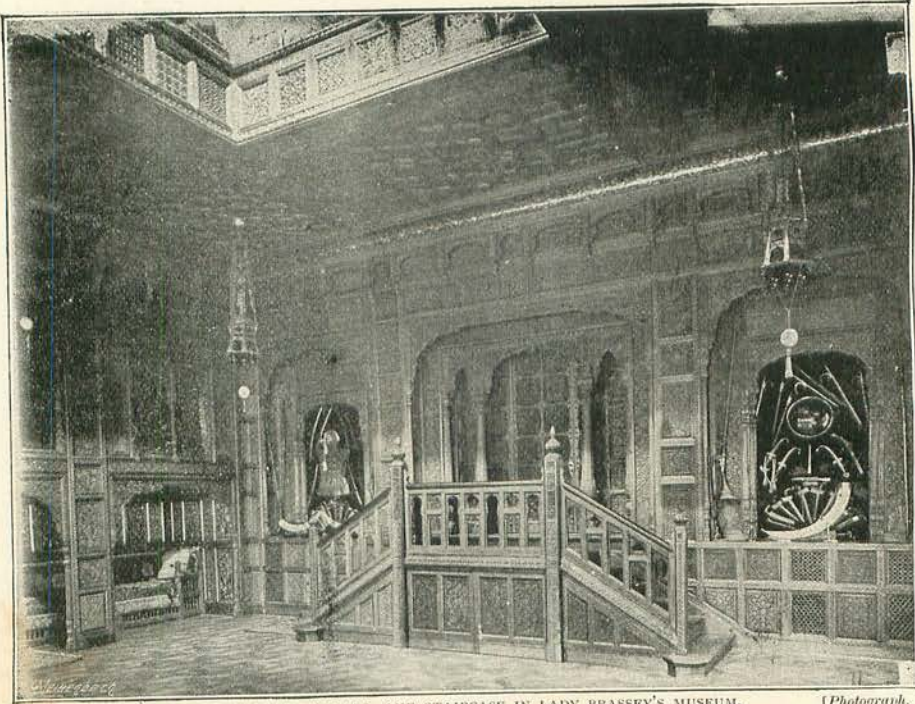
possible to do more in a short article than to just mention his various public appointments from 1866 to the present time. He was successively Member of Parliament for Devonport and Hastings; a Deputy-Lieutenant and Justice of the Peace for Sussex; from 1880 to 1884 a Civil Lord of the Admiralty, and the



From a]

FOLDING-DOORS OF CARVED TEAK IN LADY BRASSEY'S MUSEUM.

[Photograph.



From a

CARVED DOOR, PILLARS, AND STAIRCASE IN LADY BRASSEY'S MUSEUM.

[Photograph.]

following year Secretary to the Admiralty; President of the Statistical Society for the year 1879-80; and in 1886 he was raised to the peerage. Lord Brassey is one of the directors of the British North Borneo Company; of the Naval Construction Armament Company; and the Powell Duffryn Steam Coal Company. In 1893 he was appointed a Lord-in-Waiting. At present he is Chairman of the Royal Commission on Opium, which has taken up a great deal of his time; but notwithstanding all these multifarious and arduous offices, Lord Brassey takes a personal interest in philanthropic work, such as Dr. Barnardo's Homes, the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, of both of which he is president, and is a large subscriber to the funds of the Missions to Seamen; having quite recently given the munificent sum of £5,000 to assist the completion of the Sailors' Institute at Poplar.

I ventured to inquire the annual amount of his donations and subscriptions, and learnt that he considers it a duty to give at least a tenth part of his yearly income in charity. But I afterwards gathered from Mr. J. Potter—who has been Lord Brassey's secretary for twenty years, and was also a valued friend of the late Lady Brassey—that this was far too low an estimate, and that the whole amount is always greatly in excess of this.

Lord Brassey's beautiful yacht, the *Sun-*

*beam*, is well known in almost every port in the world; she is a composite three-masted schooner of 532 tons, designed by Mr. St. Clare Byrne, of Liverpool.

Under the skilful management of her owner, who is also her captain, and holds a Board of Trade certificate as such, she has gallantly weathered the fiercest storms. In her handsome saloons visitors of all ranks and nationalities have been right royally entertained, and the rippling waves have danced to the merry jests and laughter of happy groups lounging on her deck. But even over the *Sunbeam* dark clouds have occasionally gathered, and there were intervals of storm, danger, and deep affliction, of which the year 1887 has left a record. For it was in this year, and during a voyage to India and Australia, after the yacht had left Port Darwin and was 2 thousand miles from the nearest land, that the late Lady Brassey died, and was buried at sea.

In addition to the *Sunbeam*, Lord Brassey owns a very smart yawl, of 120 tons, called the *Zarita*. He is a notable exception to the old saying that a sailor makes a bad horseman, for he is difficult to beat in the hunting-field.

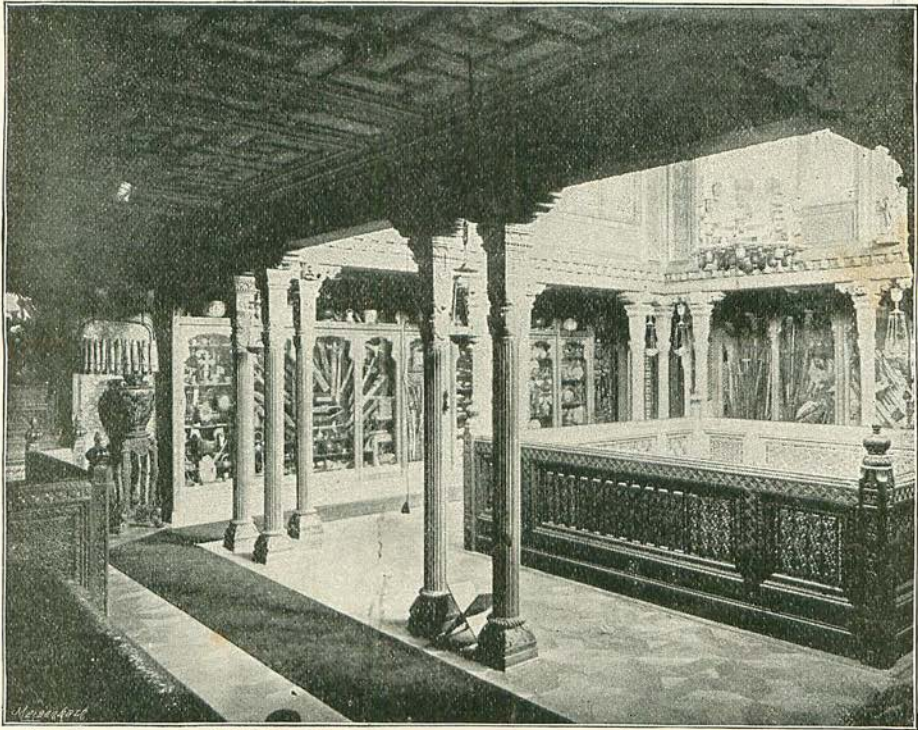
Lord Brassey has distinguished himself, also, as a writer, his "Naval Annual" being a standard work of reference on all naval

matters ; and there has been lately issued, in two large volumes, a collection of his papers and addresses on matters naval and maritime during the last twenty years. His opinions on these subjects are of great value, as they are based on sound knowledge and practical experience.

I cannot leave Park Lane without giving a brief description of "The Lady Brassey Museum." It is a dangerous place to visit unless you are prepared to break the tenth commandment. We will start with the ground floor, which is entered through beautifully carved folding doors made in

for Sultan Abdul Aziz, occupies one side of this room. The panelled walls are covered with fine specimens of Eastern arms, elephant goads, Bornean brass chain armour, and tusks. At the top of the staircase leading to the second room are cases of tropical birds, a collection of boats, models of boats, and a child's toy boat picked up by the *Sunbeam* many hundreds of miles from land.

Equally rich in carved work is the second room ; the pillars and screens are works of art. Round the walls are glass cases, in which the electric light is shaded by pearl mussel shells from the Bay of Naples. Each



From a)

A PART OF THE GALLERY ARCADE IN LADY BRASSEY'S MUSEUM.

[Photograph.]

Bombay, the pillars in front of them being of Lahore workmanship. The greater part of this lower room is what was known as the Durbar Hall of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. The woods used are teak, pine, and shittim, and the greater part of the carving has been done by two natives from the Punjab. It is lit electrically, and from the centre hangs a beautiful brass lantern, suspended by eight brass chains. Another pair of folding doors of teak, of exquisite design, lead into the street. An alcove, cushioned with rich embroidery work, purchased in Cairo, and originally intended

case is filled with curios that would make a collector tear his hair with envy. Every article has its history, but space, and a stern editor, will only permit me to enumerate a few of the most remarkable among these treasures. One case contains reminiscences of voyages and personal souvenirs of the late Lady Brassey. Among other things—a lock of Queen Pomare's hair ; a wooden drinking bowl, presented to Mr. Gladstone by the farmers in Norway while on a cruise in the *Sunbeam* in 1887. In another case specimens from mines, and a number of interesting objects recovered in 1886, from the



From a

NORMANHURST COURT.

[Photograph.]

Dutch ship *Jan Thomas*, wrecked in Table Bay at the close of the last century. Then there are all kinds of Indian jewellery and brass and silversmith's work. Pottery and porcelain from various countries, curios from New Guinea, South Sea Islands, and other uncivilized countries; natural treasures from the bottom of the sea, and a very interesting and valuable collection of antiquities excavated for the late Lady Brassey in Cyprus of "peoples extending from the Phœnician and Greek to the Roman time," consisting of lamps, bowls, and gold ornaments; the foot of a mummy picked up by Lady Brassey, funeral crowns of gold leaves, spiral glass hairpins, and paintings on glass. A great variety of savage ornaments, of Indian gold ornaments and feather work; the rarest specimen among the latter being an Aleutian Island chief's cloak, made of the feathers of the great northern loon, and trimmed with sea-parrots' bills.

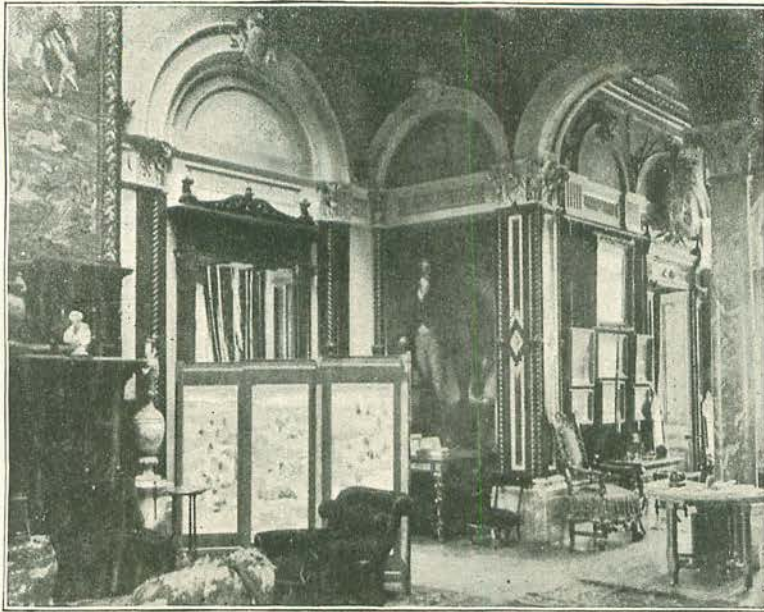
I was greatly interested in the doorway of a Buddhist monastery, from Tibet, of dark, highly-polished wood, grotesquely carved. In the museum lobby and library are ninety volumes of photographs, copies of every edition of the late Lady Brassey's and Lord Brassey's works, and Mr. Pritchett's paintings and drawings and original sketches for the illustration of the late Lady Brassey's "In the Tropics, Trades, and Roaring Forties." The subdued light, the rich odour of fragrant

sandal and cedar, the exquisite colouring, remind one more of an Indian palace than a London mansion. Putting aside the monetary value of this unique collection, which is so magnificently and appropriately housed, it is a lasting memorial of the popularity of Lord Brassey, as well as of the energy and fearlessness of the late Lady Brassey.

I must now carry my readers from Park Lane to Normanhurst Court, near to Battle, which was built for Lord Brassey by his father in 1886, from designs by Mr. Habershon, of the firm of Habershon and Brock. The style is what is called "François Premier," and the material Kentish rag-stone. It commands a magnificent view of the adjacent country, rendered historical by the Battle of Hastings. Normanhurst is some six miles from the sea as the crow flies, and the whole estate covers, roughly speaking, about 5,000 acres. As we ascend the flight of steps leading to the door, we are reminded that from these steps the late M. Waddington delivered his first public speech in England, on the occasion of the visit of a party of working men to Normanhurst, where he happened to be on a visit.

The central hall is very grand and picturesque; it is surrounded by fine oak galleries with iron balustrades. Here hangs a magnificent tapestry worked in floss silk from designs by the celebrated





From a,

CORNER OF HALL.—NORMANHURST COURT.

[Photograph.]

of decoration of the room.

Among the thousand and one curios of which the room is full, it is difficult to select the most wonderful. Several beautiful lacquer boxes ornamented with beaten gold were formerly the property, and bear the crest, of the "Tycoon," the supreme ruler of Japan, now termed Mikado. A hand-screen of arrowroot-fibre was presented to the late Lady Brassey by the Dowager Queen of Huahine. A ghastly necklace is com-

posed of braids of human hair cut from the heads of enemies killed in battle by King Kamehameha of Honolulu. Fish-hooks of mother-of-pearl are from the South Sea Islands; they require no bait, their glittering beauty serving to attract the fish. Very interesting is a cabinet containing forty-eight reduced reproductions in plaster of the Elgin marbles, being the result of twelve years' diligent labour of John Henning, who was the son of a carpenter at Paisley, and one of the founders of the Society of British Artists. My attention was next attracted by a frame containing decorations conferred on Lord Brassey's father, consisting of the Iron Crown of Austria, the Order of SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro (Italy), the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour (France). The Imperial Decree, nominating the late Mr. Brassey Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, bears the date of January 12th, 1856; then there are four medals also presented to him—of the Duke of Orleans, Victoria Bridge, Canada, Great Exhibition, 1851, and Birkenhead Docks. Two plateaux of dragon china are extremely rare—it was forbidden to export this china, so these two specimens were smuggled away on board ship under cover of the sailors' beef by the late Lady Brassey's great-grandfather, who commanded a man-of-war in the last century, one of the first British men-of-war that ever entered a Chinese port. A teapot of white earthenware, painted with flowers,

Italian painter, Perino del Vaga. It once covered a throne in the Ducal Palace at Palermo. A beautiful cabinet of lacquered wood is decorated with ornaments in relief of ivory and mother-of-pearl, while the interior has *applique* work in silver filigree, and is incrustated with turquoise and other gems. The high-backed ebony chairs in the ante-room are from the Contarini Palace, in Venice; here are also several fine specimens of modern and antique china, frames of rare coins, and pictures, one entitled "Little Buttercups," by G. A. Storey, being a portrait of Lord Brassey's little daughter, who died when only six years old. Very striking is the life-size seated figure of a woman in white marble. It is "The Song of the Shirt," by Marshall Wood.

The furniture at Normanhurst is all modern, but every room is a perfect museum of rare and beautiful objects, including some of the finest specimens of ancient and modern Japanese art-pottery, china, jewellery, ivory and silver work, etc., weapons, engravings, and medallions, collected at an immense cost. Many of these treasures, of historic value and interest, are gathered into what is known as the Pompeian Room, which has a painted ceiling, by Cendron, the subject being "Fortuna." On one side of the room is a very handsome book-case and cabinet combined, which was exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1867; and it was this piece of furniture that suggested the particular style



From a]

POMPEIAN ROOM.—NORMANHURST COURT.

[Photograph.

bears the following inscription: "The elder Brewster teapot. The original was brought to America in ye *May Flower*, A.D. 1620, and has been exactly copied and reproduced by Richard Briggs Boston, from ye Aramic collection of Gov. Lyon, 1871." Very fine are the engravings of portraits in the room.

The drawing-room ceiling is painted by Barras, and represents "The Apotheosis of Alexander"; the portières are of plum-coloured velvet with coloured silk hand embroidery. Four of the panels on the walls are covered with hangings of white silk, richly-worked, the principal design being a peacock of gorgeous plumage. These hangings were made for the beautiful and unfortunate Marie Antoinette, and were hidden away during the Revolution, and were only discovered during the Commune of 1871. A Venetian mirror, bordered with flowers of crystal, is one of a pair made for Louis XIV., and presented by him to Madame de Maintenon; the companion one was at the Palace of St. Cloud, and was shattered by one of the first shells fired from Paris during the Franco-Prussian war. Here may be seen a pair of vases painted by Queen Charlotte Matilda of England, who married Frederic King of Wurtemberg. The china-room I dare not begin to describe, much as I would like to. I will only mention one thing—a dejeuner set, in a case. The tray or plateau has in the centre the imitation of the original sardonxy

cameo, representing the "Apotheosis of Alexander." This was the property of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, daughter of George IV., and was purchased at the sale in 1818.

In the dining-room hangs an excellent portrait of Lord Brassey, by the late Frank Holl, presented by his constituents and friends at Hastings and neighbourhood. There is also a full-length portrait of the late Lady Brassey, by Sir Francis Grant, painted about thirty

years ago; and a remarkable picture of "Dinant on the Meuse," by Robert Browning, son of the great poet. The Brassey presentation shield is worthy of special mention. It was exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1857, and is of silver-gilt, 36in. in diameter, and weighing 500 oz. On it are portraits in ivory of the engineers under whom the late Mr. Brassey executed railway works, and enamel paintings of the twelve greatest engineering works carried out by him.

The shield bears the following inscription: "Presented to Thomas Brassey, Esq., with portraits of Mrs. Brassey and himself, to express the gratitude, respect, and good wishes of his agents, sub-contractors, and workmen, and to perpetuate the association of his name with some of the greatest works and most eminent engineers of his country. 2 April, 1857." In the late Lady Brassey's room are a washstand and console table that were a part of the furniture in Napoleon I.'s bedroom at St. Helena.

The boudoir is octagonal in shape, with dome ceiling decorated like those of the Alhambra. Here are several fine tankards and cups won by Mrs. Brassey's horses and dogs. A ribbon of white silk was sent to the late Lady Brassey by the Crown Princess of Prussia when her eldest daughter, Princess Charlotte of Meiningen, was married. Another valuable gift is a gold and pink enamel locket, set with pearls and diamonds, presented by Chulaboukoum Paranca Rajadhiraja, King of

Siam, and containing his portrait. His Majesty visited Normanhurst in 1859. A beautiful gold cable bracelet, weighing thirty sovereigns, is a gift from the Maharajah of Johore. A native woman's dress of white linen came from Queen Kaiulani, of the Sandwich Islands.

Mounted on a chair are the head, feet, and plumage of an ostrich, whose flesh formed a part of the menu of a dinner at Normanhurst. There are a great number of pictures from the Alnutt collection, including several by David Cox, and a water-colour, "Solitude," said to be one of the largest in the world, by G. Barrett, and a valuable collection of the engraved works of Raphael Morghen.

Very beautiful and rare is the royal feather cloak. When the king of the Sandwich Islands visited Normanhurst in 1881, he greatly admired it, and said that he was then trying to collect sufficient feathers to make a new royal robe for Queen Kapiolani, and offering a dollar for every single feather. So the monetary value of this cloak can be imagined. The feathers of which it is com-

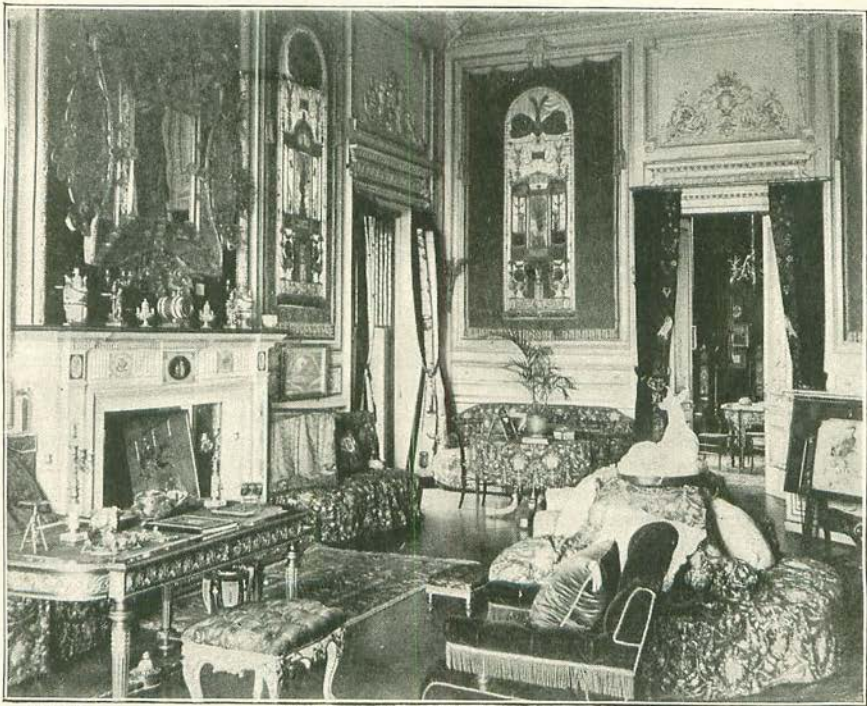
posed are scarlet and yellow, arranged in diamond-shaped pattern. An exquisite piece of gold brocade was presented by Take-hito, nephew and heir-apparent of the Mikado of Japan. A mother-of-pearl ivy-leaf candlestick, mounted in silver, was one that

was placed at the foot of Marie Antoinette's coffin, having been previously given by her to one of her ladies-in-waiting. The late Lady Brassey acquired a large collection of gold ornaments from the graves of some aboriginal races of the north-western province of South America. They include not only personal and religious ornaments but also rare implements, and show how thoroughly the goldsmith's art was understood and practised by the Indians. Some of these graves contained ornaments worth from £4,000 to £13,000.

A written description can never do justice to the exquisite works of art with which every room, both at Park Lane and Normanhurst Court, is enriched. Days and weeks might be profitably spent in studying them.

A beautiful painting of Lady Brassey, by Mr. Ellis Roberts, will shortly be completed, and added to the Normanhurst collection of portraits.

Normanhurst Court is a lovely spot; and its lord and lady are as noted for their lavish



From a]

DRAWING-ROOM.—NORMANHURST COURT.

[Photograph.

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hospitality as they are for their courteous kindness to all with whom they come in contact. I forgot to mention that Lord Brassey has three daughters married. And—strange coincidence—all to masters of hounds who reside within a ten miles' radius of Normanhurst.