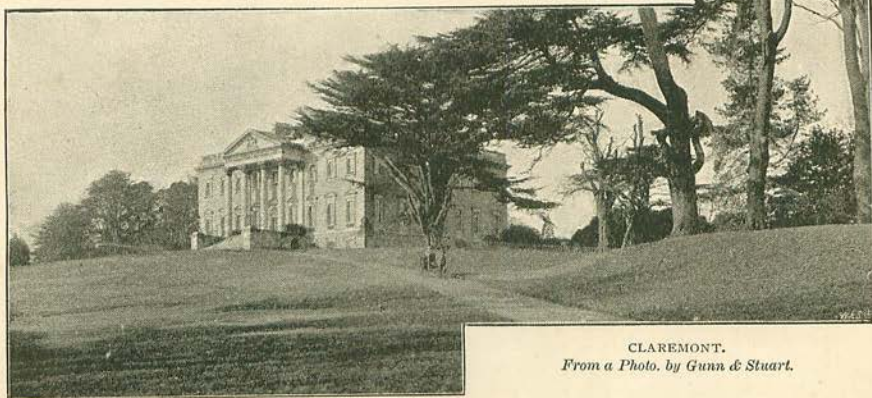


H.R.H. The Duchess of Albany.

By MARY SPENCER-WARREN.

(With the special permission and approval of H.R.H. the Duchess of Albany.)



CLAREMONT.
From a Photo. by Gunn & Stuart.

SEARCH where you will, you will not readily find a quieter and prettier spot than Claremont: right away from busy town or noisy railway, having its approach through a sleepy, quaint old village, that carries one back to the days of our great-grandmothers, when the one event of the day was the dashing through of the stage coach with its team of spanking greys, and its red-coated guard with his merry horn. And so little have things altered there with the march of civilization, that I feel almost as though I have taken a leap backwards, for there on the green stands a stage coach; there is "mine host" at the door of a real old country inn, and here are the little cottages, with the women in white caps and aprons looking out of the doors, the ducks and fowls, and all the usual sights of a quiet hamlet.

A little farther on, and I drive through some handsome gates—swung open by a keeper in the Queen's scarlet—on past the pretty lodge, past the farm buildings, the obelisk, the entrances to stables and gardens, and on up the smooth drive, to alight in front of the mansion.

It is a place with many interesting associations, both romantic and saddening. Here kings, queens, princes, and nobles have lived their various lives; some chequered and disappointed ones, while for others there have been seasons of unalloyed happiness; but this is to anticipate.

Louis Philippe and Marie Amèlie found

shelter here for many years, shorn of crown and devoid of kingdom, to die amongst the people with whom they had found a "city of refuge."

Meanwhile, our beloved Queen—then the Princess Victoria—had often stayed here; had played in the rooms, and on terrace and lawn; and in the grounds had taken her first lessons in sketching from Nature. At a later epoch in her life she came again, this time with husband and children, and as she watched the latter at play, lived her young life over again.

Then one of the children, the Princess Louise, comes here for a quiet retreat after the State wedding at Windsor; and still later, the youngest, Prince Leopold, brings his bride here to her home.

It would only be painful to dwell on the sorrow that so soon cast its shadow over this happy household; rather let us rejoice that the Royal widow is not left alone. Consolation is accorded in children's happy voices ringing through house and grounds, their presence bringing sunshine and dispelling grief.

Just as I am about to mount the steps, the two children rush down, laden with barrows and dolls, for their morning gambols on the grass. The little Duke waves his hat, in response to my greeting, as he flies over the terraces, closely followed by his sister; and I stand a minute or two watching them, and right happy-looking children they are, near enough of an age to be real playmates, and to thoroughly enjoy each other's society.



THE DUCHESS OF ALBANY WITH HER CHILDREN—PRINCESS ALICE AND THE DUKE OF ALBANY.
From a Photo. by Gunn & Stuart.

Standing thus at the summit of the hill, and the foot of the broad flight of steps, from which a good view of the Surrey Hills and the Epsom Downs is obtained, the mansion appears to be about the centre of the park. It is an oblong, square building; brick, with stone dressings, fronted with a Corinthian portico, and surmounted with a pediment containing the Clive arms carved in the centre; for here, during some time, Lord Clive passed a most misanthropic existence. From this portico I step through the half-glass doors direct into the entrance-hall: a spacious and lofty apartment, supported with columns of scagliola marble, having an oblong ceiling decorated

with plaster relief, and walls panelled in devices of low-relief. The floor—a marble one—has an oblong centre corresponding with the roof. In the middle of the hall stands a fine billiard table, placed there by the late Duke, which is kept covered with a very handsome hand-worked cloth. A row of well-cushioned basket chairs faces the entrance, making a cool and comfortable lounge on a summer's day. China vases containing palms, carved antique chairs and tables, swan screens, Oriental hanging lamps, busts, portraits, bronzes, and other objects of interest abound; while over by the marble fireplace is something much treasured by the little Duke, namely, a suit of armour sent him by his aunt,



From a Photo. by]

THE HALL.

[Gunn & Stuart.

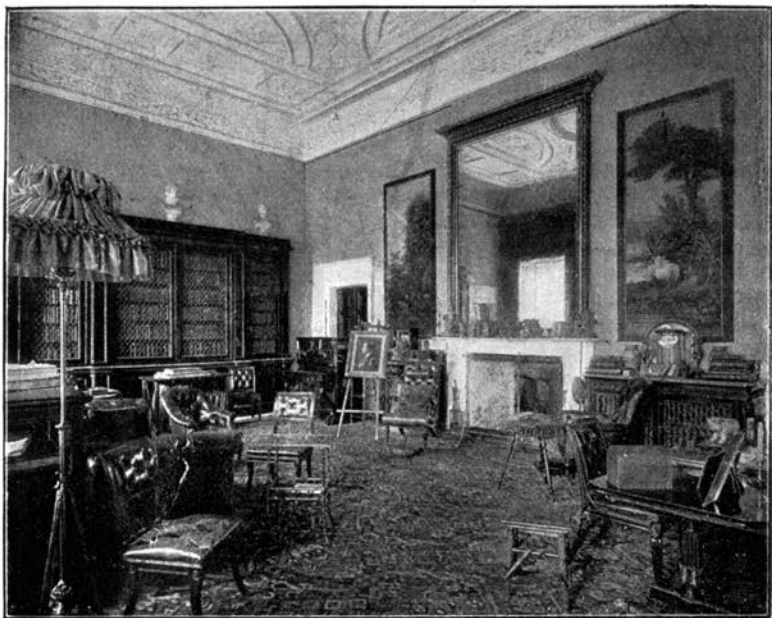
the Queen Regent of Holland. Certainly it looks a little ponderous for His Royal Highness at present, but perhaps he will fill it better a little later, and a gay figure he will cut with helmet and flowing white plumes. In this hall I was present at quite a merry and happy family scene. The Duchess had graciously promised me special sittings of herself and children for *THE STRAND MAGAZINE*, and so a corner was fitted up for the occasion, and here the three grouped themselves in front of the camera, groups evidently being preferable to the Duchess; indeed, as she remarked, "she was seldom without her children, and liked all to be photographed together." This photograph is the one here reproduced.

One can see at
*Vol. ix.—3.

a glance what a true mother Her Royal Highness is, and how the children adore her; and who could help smiling when they popped their happy faces round the screen with the evident intention of making their mother laugh when she was being taken alone, or when they shouted with laughter when the entire group nearly subsided, on a support in the rear being inadvertently moved? But the portrait-taking is

at an end, and so we will proceed to view the house.

Many doors open from the hall; the first I use is that leading to the library. Its electric blue walls are well lined with lettered bookcases containing much sound English literature; and on either side of the fireplace



From a Photo. by]

THE LIBRARY.

[Gunn & Stuart.

is a splendid piece of tapestry from the Windsor School, of which the late Duke of Albany was President; these Her Royal Highness herself pointed out to me as being quite of the best specimens the school had turned out. Some massive side-tables are also laden with books; and on a little table near the fire I note some scholastic works, with places marked for lessons to be presently imparted to the Duke by a tutor. Over at one side stands a French piano, which you can either manipulate in the ordinary way, or by turning a handle; just a huge source of delight to children, and the evidences of children are in every room at Claremont. I once heard it said that the entire place is like a mausoleum to the late Princess Charlotte; well, there are certainly many reminders of that lady; but what I chiefly noticed was "something for the little ones," whichever way I turned.

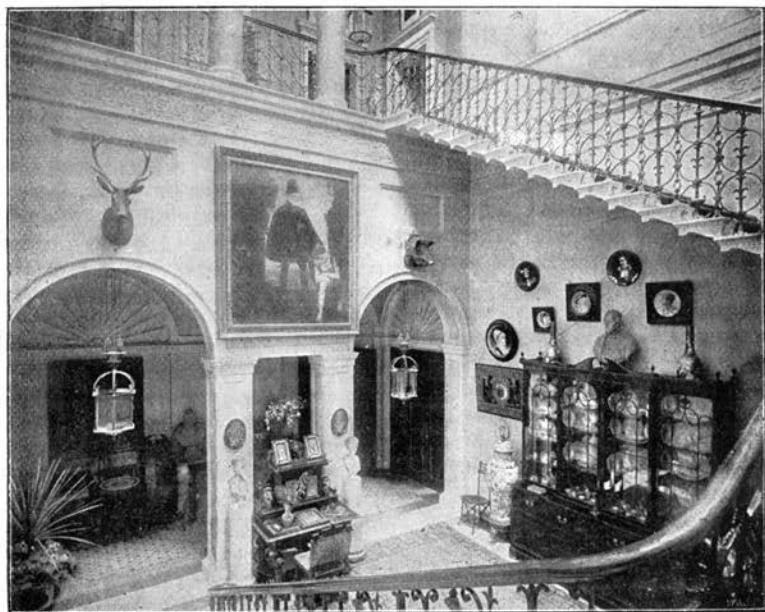
On an easel you may observe a good portrait of the late Duke, and on the top of the bookcases are several busts of Royal personages. Various writing-tables hold framed portraits, books of views, etc. The floor is carpeted in Turkish, the windows handsomely curtained in crimson and drab, the furniture being the usual leather-covered.

Next I go to the inner hall: from here the staircase opens, thus it is effectively lighted direct from the roof of the building. It has a good marble floor, plentifully scattered with Persian rugs, and here and

there stands and baskets of choice palms and lilies. A magnificent specimen of wood carving is here to be seen in a table and cabinet, a wedding present from the Queen of Roumania. On the wall facing the entrance is a painting by Titian of Philip II. of Spain, on the left stands a large cabinet of beautiful china, while opposite is another mechanical piano, having its handle at a particularly convenient and inviting place for little folks. I had a turn myself, but it responded so loudly that I let go quickly in sheer self-defence. If you study the photograph here introduced, you will notice some exquisite sculptured work. A "mural decoration" by Williamson, a sculptor who resides at Esher, has much of his work at Claremont, and has perhaps had more Royal commissions than has fallen to the lot of any other member of his profession. This particular work is in three divisions, and was erected in memory of the former residence of the Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold. The middle tablet typifies their life there, having representation of aid to the widows and orphans, and underneath an inscription, "They visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction." The tablet on the left represents the apotheosis of the wife, the inscription being, "Sorrow not as a man without hope, for her who sleeps in Jesus." On the right we see the crown of Belgium offered to the Prince, with the words underneath, "Seek the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." A little higher

up the staircase is a bust by Sir Edgar Boehm of the Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne; it is a speaking likeness, and a fine example of delicacy of detail. The columns and pilasters of Siena marble give a solid and costly appearance to a staircase that is exceptionally fine.

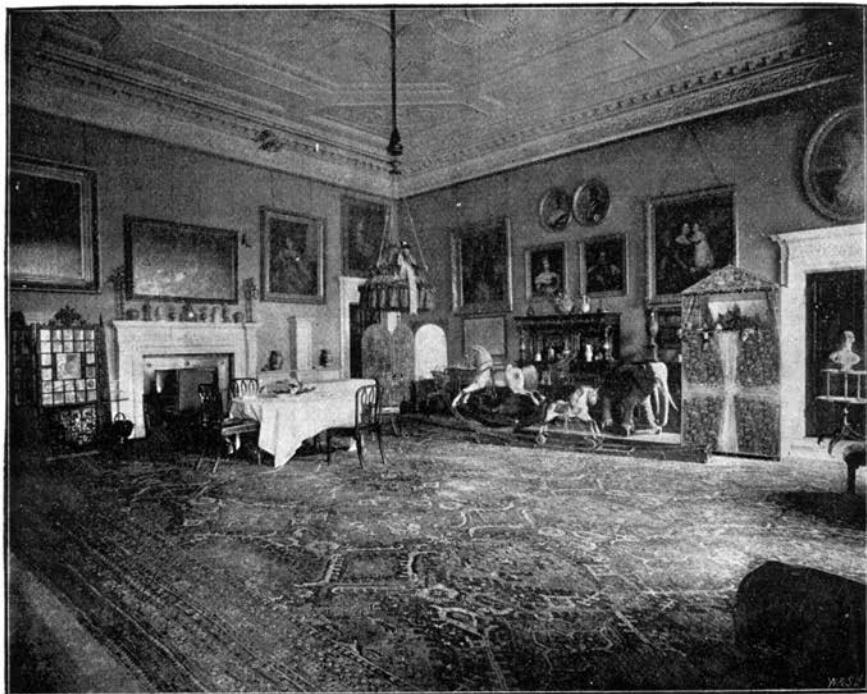
In one corner is a door opening to the dining-room, where your attention is immediately attracted to the number of grand works in oil adorning the walls. Some



From a Photo. by

INNER HALL AND STAIRCASE.

[Gunn & Stuart.



From a Photo. by]

THE DINING-ROOM.

[Gunn & Stuart.

of them are full length, one being Her Majesty the Queen: on one side of her the Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg in uniform, and on the other the Princess Charlotte in high-waisted black velvet, ruffs and puffings of white satin, with her light brown hair dressed in coils on the top. Other paintings in the room are George III., the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, the Prince Consort, the Duchess of Kent, and the Princess Victoria (seemingly not more than three years of age), one or two landscapes, etc. The room is of splendid proportions, and the really good-sized dining-table, standing at one end, looks quite tiny. It has a well executed cream ceiling, an old oaken floor, covered in the centre with a Turkey carpet, crimson curtains, and a crimson leather-covered suite of furniture. There are some massive marble-topped side-tables, with rare china vases on them, on one being also a marble bust of Her Majesty the Queen, presented to the infant Duke in 1884.

On the walls may also be seen some fine old china and some quaint pieces of armour. Various busts, bronze figures, and other curios are scattered here and there, one of which is a Kaffir "jowala" bowl, a present to the late Duke. Then there are some more

things, which are not generally recognised as dining-room furniture, namely, a Punch-and-Judy show, with any amount of puppets, a monster toy elephant, and two rocking-horses. To all intents and purposes, this is a spacious and warm playground for bad weather. Over near the marble mantel is a curious and antiquated-looking carved screen, filled with photographs, chiefly of Royalty, most of them being of a period remote enough to make them a quaint and interesting study, both for the dresses and the photography.

The drawing-room contains very many things over which one is disposed to linger. Some have histories: the carpet, for instance, an Eastern one of nondescript pattern, blue and pink. It was taken from some Indian Princes by Lord Clive, who brought it over to put in the new mansion he purposed to build. It was not the shape and size for a room of ordinary appearance, and far too costly to cut up, but conquerors of countries are not to be beaten by a carpet! So when the house was put up, a room was specially constructed for it. So, instead of making a carpet for a room, a room was built for a carpet! Unique, I thought; at any rate, I have never met with a similar instance.

Then there is a piano, which is worth seeing; it is an exact copy of Beethoven's.

It was constructed in 1817, by John Broadwood and Sons, for H.R.H. the Princess Charlotte of Wales, and was renovated in 1874 by command of the Queen. Having very much the appearance of the ancient harpsichord, it has a beautiful silvery tone and clear, delicate expression. The marble mantelpiece is most exquisitely carved, and said to be worth over £1,000, on either side of it standing some large and almost priceless vases—also brought from India by Lord Clive. There are some choice old cabinets in various parts of the room; two of them are Indian ones.

There are some fine paintings on the silk brocaded walls, notably one each of the late Duke and the Duchess. On an easel stands

strawberry (hand-embroidered), and gold and tapestry, with hangings of plush and silk to match; some costly miniatures, some rare old china, a framed copy of the signatures to the Berlin Treaty, and (the children again) an assortment of valuable mechanical toys are all good to behold; as is the pale blue and cream "Adams" decoration of ceiling and fresco. One chair in the room I must make special mention of; it is a *chef d'œuvre* from the before-noted Windsor School of Tapestry, has a perfect picture in silk of Windsor Castle on it, was made specially for, and presented to, the President on his marriage.

Next comes the Duchess's boudoir. I shall always have a vivid recollection of this



From a Photo. by]

THE DRAWING-ROOM.

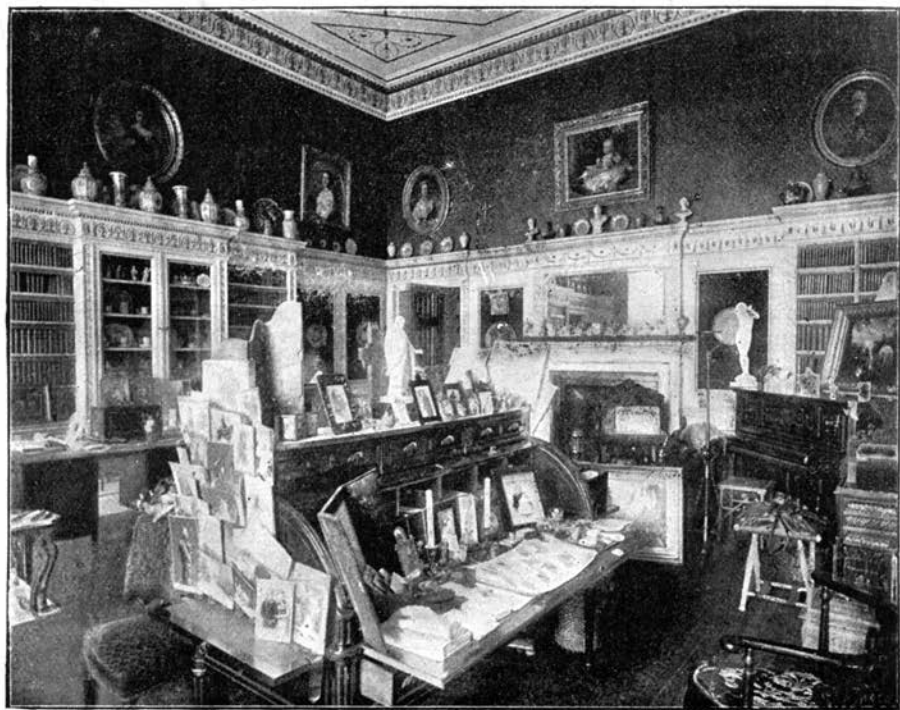
[Gunn & Stuart.

one of the Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne, by Richmond. On pedestals are some valuable bronze vases, and on buhl and other tables are many pieces of bijouterie, some books, busts, and framed portraits; one frame contains "Arolsen," the early home of the Duchess; and a folding leather case near has in it no fewer than twenty-four portraits of the late Duke—from earliest childhood until nearly the close of his life. Three or four very handsome screens—one or two hand-painted; furniture of gold and

room, for I spent some considerable time there: one day having a quiet look round, and another day being graciously received by Her Royal Highness, who favoured me with some considerable portion of her time, looking over some photographs I had of the Royal Palaces of the Queen of Holland (you remember that the Queen Regent and the Duchess of Albany are sisters), talking of magazines and journals, and those who write for them, and arranging for the promised sittings, etc. I have no intention of enlarging

upon the appearance or manner of the Duchess; everybody knows how kind and amiable she is, because they hear it so often; and I should imagine that she must get just as tired of the class of writers who con-

sorts, most of them being of great value. The prevailing decorative tones are cream, gold, and ruby, presenting a very effective whole, the ruby being introduced in panels, on which some costly china is effectively



From a Photo. by]

THE BOUDOIR.

[Gunn & Stuart.

tinually laud her amiability as she is with the opposite faction, who contribute to some of the society papers gossip which is as undignified as it is untrue. If I tell you what chiefly impressed me respecting the Duchess, it is the fact of what a model mother she is.

You cannot be in the house long without noticing how she loves and cares for her children, and how closely she watches over their welfare: not indulgence—but firm kindness; and how those children do respond to it! What perfect sympathy there seems to be between them all. The eldest one, the Princess Alice, looks to be robust; she has pleasing ways, and bears a wonderful likeness to our Royal Family. Her Royal Highness is now eleven years of age, her brother (the Duke) being nine. He is a bright, cheerful boy, with a clever-looking face, and just as brimful of fun as boys generally are.

As you will see in the photograph, the boudoir is very full of knick-knacks of divers

displayed. On the walls are several of Winterhalter's paintings, chiefly of the Royal Family; and in various parts of the room are busts, chiefly by Williamson. There are some well-filled bookshelves of English and French literature, the works of well-known authors: a careful selection of rather deep reading; but the room was formerly the sitting-room of the late Duke, and it is not necessary for me to say one word of the literary abilities and qualifications of the most scholarly of the Queen's sons. Evidently the Duchess has similar tastes, for I notice a ponderous and abstruse work lying beside the chair from which she has just risen.

In the centre of the bookshelves is a glass-fronted cupboard, full of rare old china, much of it having been wedding presents. One service of Sèvres I particularly noticed, given by the Earl and Countess Beauchamp. I should not like to have to tell you how many photographs there are in the room; but it is the same in every Royal

house, photographs shower in from all directions. Of course, the family faces predominate on both sides.

Here is a basket that might very well be labelled "Spare moments," for that is just what it represents: it is full of various articles in process of knitting; is taken up every odd moment, and grows to an astonishing amount in a very little time. Busy and active fingers has the Duchess, and I am told by one of the ladies of the household how articles are knitted for the "Guild," and how complete outfits are made for young girls just going out into life, how weekly working meetings are held in the library, and how, when the periodical collection of Guild work comes on, the Duchess works from early morning until late at night, sorting, labelling, packing, and doing the hundred and one duties that the work brings day after day, with a cheerful word and a smiling face for everybody.

Near at hand is a Brinsmead piano, where recreation or practice can go on, and over in a corner is an easel holding a drawing just commenced by the Princess Alice. The very handsome writing-table in the centre

—a wedding present to the late Duke from the residents of Boyton Manor—has on it, amongst other things, a fine statuary group, a gold battered bowl from the Queen, and a china dish from an old nurse. Under one of the windows is a glass case containing many curios, gold caskets, gold keys, and a gold medal—one of twelve, ten of which were silver—struck in commemoration of the decapitation of Charles I.

The school-room is next, and a delightful apartment it is—a ceiling richly decorated in cream and gold, and walls in electric blue brocade of fern-leaf pattern, these having on them some family portraits, some landscapes, some antique pieces of armour, and some old

china. Busts of the late Emperor Frederick of Germany and the Grand Duchess of Hesse stand in arched recesses, while numerous portraits of the Royal children, and their cousin, the Queen of the Netherlands, may be seen in various directions. One is especially striking: it is the little Duke in the uniform of his father's regiment, handsomely framed, standing on a table in the foreground. Globes, maps, writing-tables, patent desks and seats, and all the usual school books are well to the fore; while flags, bats, balls, etc., are plentiful—in fact, one corner of the room is a perfect toy store, called, I believe, "Toy Corner": there is quite a wonderful arrangement of them, of every



From a Photo. by

THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

[Gunn & Stuart.

shape, sort, and size conceivable. Then there are flowers, ferns, and singing birds in their cages, making the place look particularly bright and cheerful, and very unlike the abode of dreariness that distinguishes some school-rooms. The presiding genius of the room is Miss Potts, a pleasant-faced, practical lady, with whom I enjoyed one or two brief chats. This is the apartment in which the Princess Charlotte died, and it was quite undisturbed, and shut up, for some considerable time after that sad event.

Now I walk through some of the dressing and bed-rooms, those that are on the ground floor. They are all much of a muchness for decoration and fittings. Here is a picture of



From a Photo. by]

THE DUCHESS'S DRESSING-ROOM.

[Gunn & Stuart.

the dressing-room of Her Royal Highness the Duchess. It is very effectively decorated, ceiling and fresco in cream and gold, with walls of pink and gold. The furniture is white-wood with hand-painting and brass mounts. On the walls are some family likenesses and some modern pictures, on the floor a rich red carpet. A good bust of the late Duke stands on the chest of drawers, the dressing-table showing a French time-piece, some silver-mounted glass, and an abundance of choice flowers. The Duchess is very fond of flowers, and has plenty of them all over the house.

Opening from here is the bedroom, decorated in the same style. The wardrobe shows some very beautiful painted panels, and is surmounted with the crown and banners. On one side of the room is the small bed used by the Princess Alice, who, I was told, had slept in the same room as the Duchess ever since some burglars had selected Claremont for a Christmas raid. It seems they had planted a ladder against an upstairs window, and had actually entered a room where the children were. They, being then very little, and firm believers in the "Santa Claus" visits peculiar to the season, were not at all alarmed: thought, no doubt, that was the proper entrance for strangers, who *might* be fairies in disguise. Fortunately a servant appeared, who estimated Mr. William Sikes at his

proper value, gave the alarm, and the downward journey on the ladder was quicker than the upward one.

The Duke's dressing and bed-rooms are near at hand, and I first go through them and note the general effect, which is plain though good; and then I go upstairs to the suite of apartments known as the Queen's Rooms. They are very quietly furnished, much more so than the rooms of thousands of Her Majesty's

subjects: plain plaster ceilings, with walls papered in grey and blue, on them being many prints and engravings, family portraits, and horses and dogs that were favourites of the Queen. Over one mantelpiece is one of Landseer's best. In the sitting-room some of the furniture is gold burnished or mahogany frame with upholstery of plush or tapestry with floral needlework. One of John Broadwood's pianos stands at one side, an old favourite, used times and often by Her Majesty and the Prince Consort. In front of the fireplace is a rich needlework screen, and over against one of the windows is a fine specimen of painted insects on porcelain, intersected with pressed ferns. The prevailing fittings of the entire suite of rooms are rosewood, and green and white chintz; all the Brussels carpets being the same colour ground-work, with fern-leaf and floral design.

There now only remain two other rooms to see—the Princess Beatrice's bedroom, and one of the visitors' rooms—as a type of a suite of such. The first room is, if anything, the plainer of the two. Plaster ceiling, flock papered walls, green carpet, rosewood furniture (with chintz covers), an ordinary brass bedstead, and chiffonnier, over which is a plain bookcase.

Before going downstairs, the Duchess kindly allows me to see a small room, which is called the "Museum." It is so small that



From a Photo. by]

THE MUSEUM.

[Gunn & Stuart.

an adequate photograph is impossible; but contains a great deal that is of much interest—articles that are dearly cherished by the Duchess. A large carved oak wardrobe with sliding panels, and some regimental cases on the top, contain the uniforms and guns, swords, etc., worn and used by the late Duke; a glass-fronted cupboard has in it various documents and books, and a number of walking-sticks are arranged above each other on the wall near the entrance. Many of these were doubtless presents, for I noticed labels attached, one of them bearing the name of Garibaldi.

Downstairs I walk through the vaulted passages and kitchens; then out into the magnificent grounds, and over the conservatories to see the multiplicity of choice camellias, orange trees, etc., through the acres of flower and kitchen gardens—where a special feature is a large number of azaleas—and then on to see the Mausoleum. This was originally intended for an alcove for the Princess Charlotte, commenced during her residence by her husband. When she died, he finished it in a much more costly manner. It is

Pointed architecture, the interior having a groined ceiling with rich tracery, and stained glass windows. One of the best views in the grounds is to be obtained here: the position is very elevated, the lake winding in and out far below, giant trees and clusters of rhododendrons interspersed. I must not forget to say that the children's gardens are just in front, the same wonderful arrangement of plants and seeds that little fingers always get; with the same little grim borders marking outline and division. While I stand looking I hear their young voices in the distance, and descry them scampering down the drive carrying a birdcage between them. I inwardly wonder if it has an inhabitant, and whether, if so, it is accustomed to that shaky travelling.

The first sight I had of Claremont, they were in the foreground, and when I leave on the last day, I catch sight of their bright young faces watching from a window; and my last impressions are, perhaps, more particularly of a happy home than they are of a stately Royal residence.