



THAT might be said of Lincolnshire which Cæsar said of ancient Gaul, "*Est omnis divisain partes tres.*" There is the division of Holland, consisting almost entirely of fertile fenland, with few grain crops, but possessing a wealth of magnificent churches thickly dotted through the land. There is also the large and varied division of Lindsey, with its fen, its wolds, and its sandy coasts and dunes. On the whole, the division of Kesteven, in which the subject of this article lies, is the prettiest and most attractive

part of this broad-acred shire. Here we have the wooded, undulating scenery which is characteristic of middle England, with a marked feature in the "Cliff" range, which presents a curiously steep western declivity between Ancaster and Lincoln. Grantham and Stamford have surroundings as attractive as most towns in England, and Stoke Rochford, which is the close neighbour of Easton Hall, is a village of sweet rural characteristics, while the grand churches of Grantham, Heckington, and Sleaford add distinction to the region. It is

not surprising to find that this part of Lincolnshire, and the portions of the neighbouring shires which adjoin it, are rich in country seats, and Easton Hall, which lies near to the Leicestershire and Rutland borders, is, in fact, one of a group of estates, which includes the parks of Belton, Syston, Belvoir, and Stoke Rochford. All of these, save the second, have been illustrated and described in these pages.

Easton is a township in the parish of Stoke Rochford, lying to the east of the Great North Road, and Sir Hugh Cholmeley is the sole landowner there. Anciently the place belonged to the Tybtofts and the Scropes, to whom in the course of time others succeeded, and in the year 1606 it passed by sale to Sir Henry Cholmeley, Kt., descended from the ancient Cheshire family, who died in 1620.

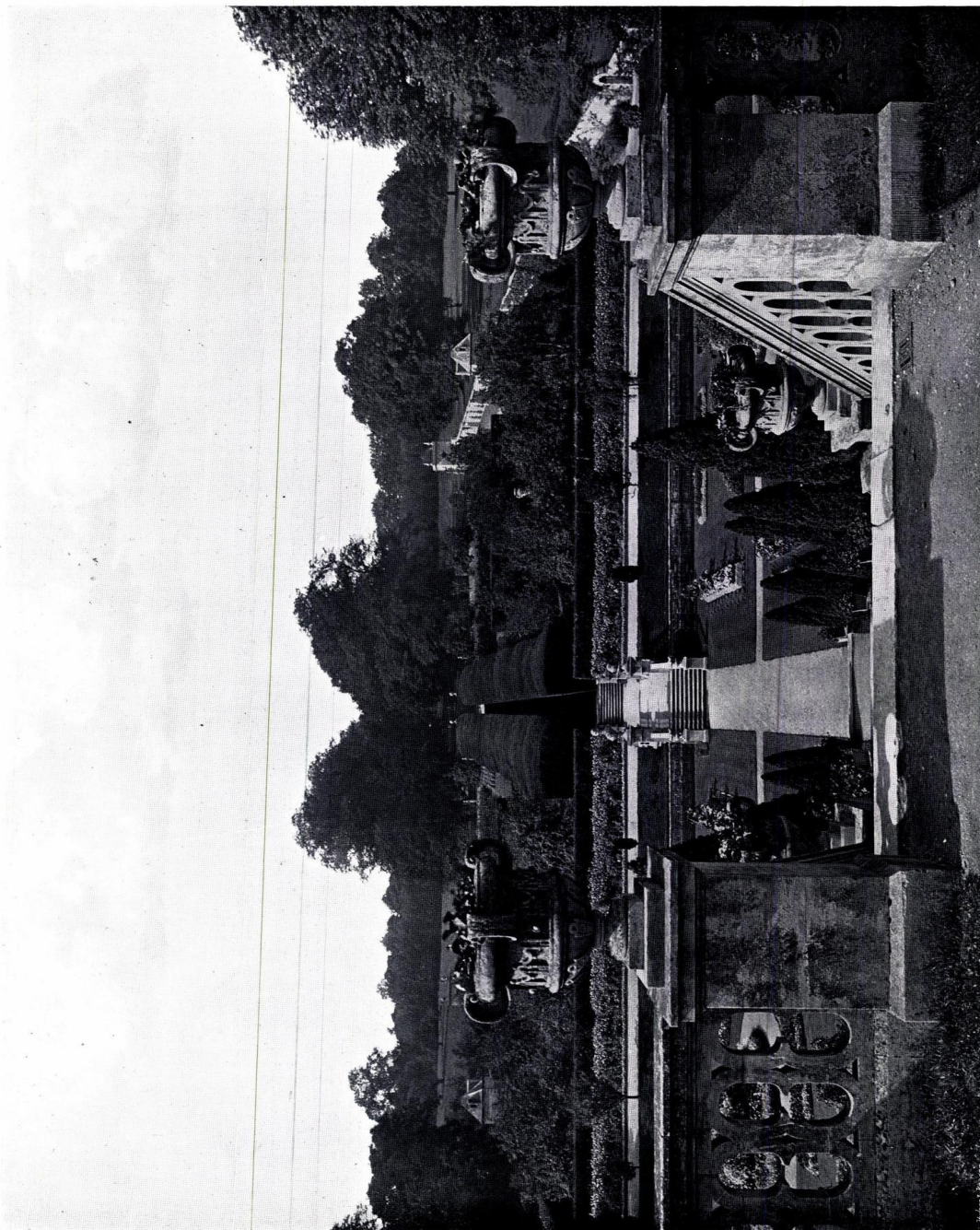
Through the estate flows the gentle River Witham, coming southward from Belton and Grantham, and the house of Sir Henry stood upon the hill above, commanding a view of the beautifully wooded valley. Times changed, and through the changing taste of generations the mansion has almost passed away. Mr. Montague Cholmeley took down the west wing, which was reputed to be the oldest part of the house, about a century since, and in the year 1805 he was rebuilding it, as well as the centre. This gentleman was descended from the purchaser of the estate, and was High-Sheriff of the county in 1805, being created a Baronet in the following year. For some years he represented Grantham in Parliament, as did his successor. The present Baronet is the younger and only surviving son of Sir Montague John Cholmeley, his mother having been Lady Georgiana, fifth daughter of



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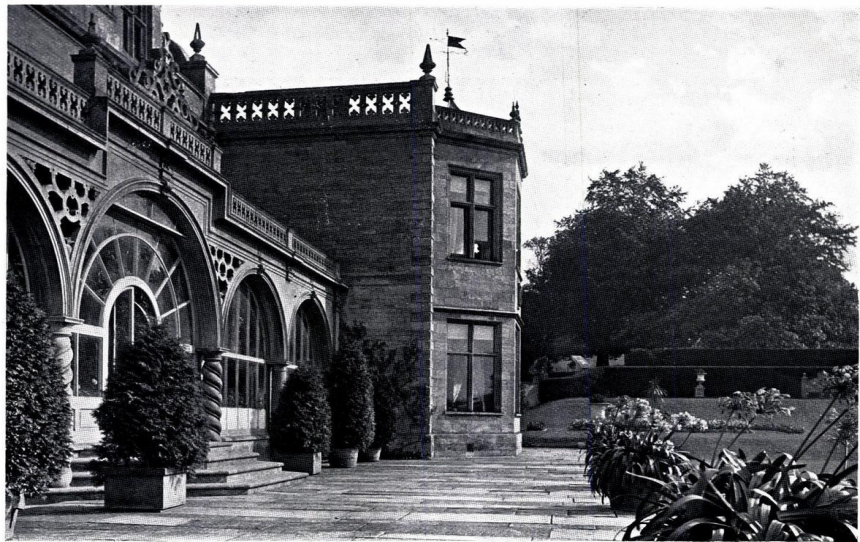
A VIEW FROM THE UPPER TERRACE.

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William, eighth Duke of St. Albans.

The architectural features of Easton Hall, as it now stands on the hill, belong to a much earlier form than that of the building of 1805, but the bulk of the structure is much more recent, and embodies all the best features of the domestic Tudor style. There could, we are apt to think, be nothing better. The large and lofty windows, with their many storied panes, the perforated cresting of the house, and its picturesque gables and chimneys, are, indeed, the features of a fine architectural conception, and in its spacious and dignified character Easton Hall is very attractive and impressive. Within it is extremely beautiful, and it has a very fine collection of mediæval arms and armour.

The situation, moreover, is all that could be wished, for the eminence is well wooded, and, by a somewhat steep declivity, the land descends to the River Witham, with a charming outlook beyond. The park has much foliage, and is very fair to behold, though at Stoke Rochford Park, on the other side of the Great North Road, the woodland attraction may perhaps even be greater. The problem that lay before the garden maker was comparatively simple at Easton, but in simple matters great triumphs may be achieved. There is and was abundance of wood upon the crest and slope, and contrast in the gardenage is afforded by the numerous grass terraces, which give an easy and varied descent to a broad lawn diversified with beautiful flower-beds near the water. The



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stairway by which we go down is excellent, and the garden stonework throughout leaves nothing to be desired. Sentinel yews mark the way to where that beautiful bridge spans the still water. This, indeed, is a fine achievement in stone, and the double arching of its construction, the stairways of ascent, the perforated parapet, and the globular terminals, make an admirable picture reflected in the placid mirror below. By the water-side are walks in which it is pleasant to linger in the evenings of summer when the shadows lengthen, for gay and



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THE TERRACES AND THE BRIDGE.

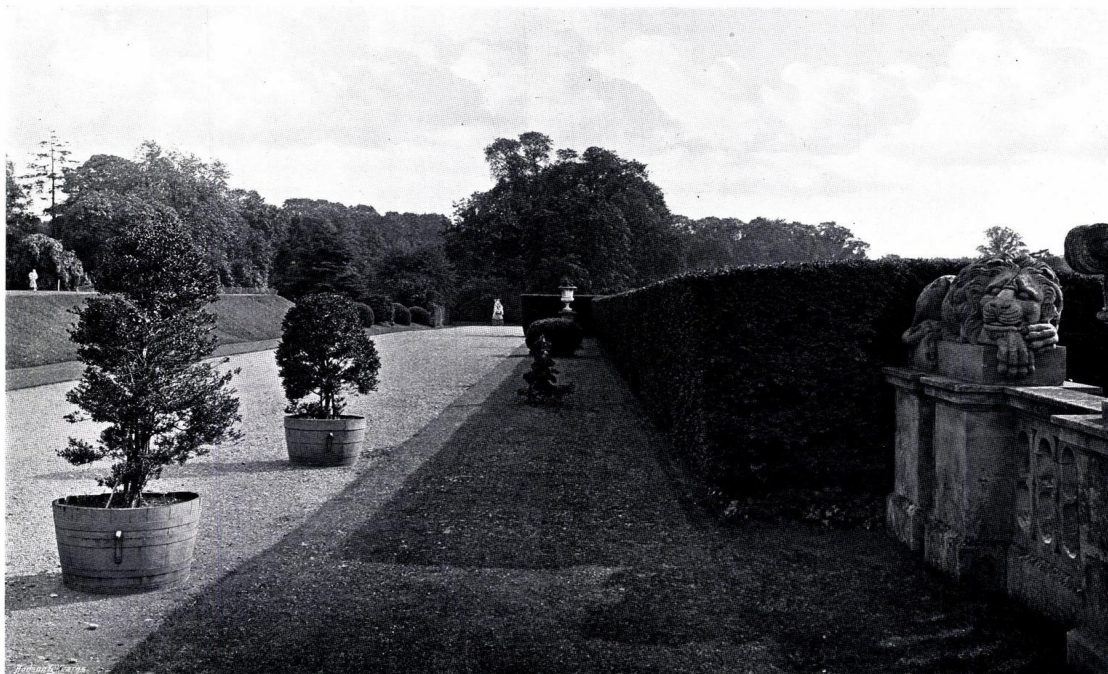
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fragrant beds of flowers are there, and beyond is another ascent to an avenue of trees. The whole garden area is surveyed from the upper terrace by the house, the broad reaches of the park closing a delightful prospect. It will be noticed that the composition is symmetrical. Through the midst of the pleasure runs the long pathway from the descent, over the bridge, and between the wall-like hedges to the avenue beyond, and on either hand are all the beauties that can enrich a modern garden, while picturesque garden-houses are there, from which new beauties may be enjoyed.

It may be said of such a situation as this, that it possesses those elements which the Italian garden-maker loved. Here, at least, is the varied ground of hill and hollow which gave him the opportunity for his terraces and his flights of steps leading from level to level. He would have accentuated by hedges or balustraded walls some features which at Easton Hall are left unadorned, but there is something of the distinction of national character in the different manners in which the same essentials are developed. This is as it should be. Mr. Sieveking, in that fascinating volume "The Praise of Gardens," remarks that much ridicule has been levelled at Italian pleasures for being only a means of walking up and down stairs in the open air, the suggestion being, one supposes, that the Italians have deliberately chosen to form their gardens on steep declivities. The choice is not always deliberate, but those are unfortunate who have no well-accentuated slopes for their gardenage. A witty writer, Mr. Sieveking tells us, replied to the critic, that the Italian could find but little pleasure in the melancholy monotony of an English park, and least of all in a large extent of level lawn; and that if you told him he was to



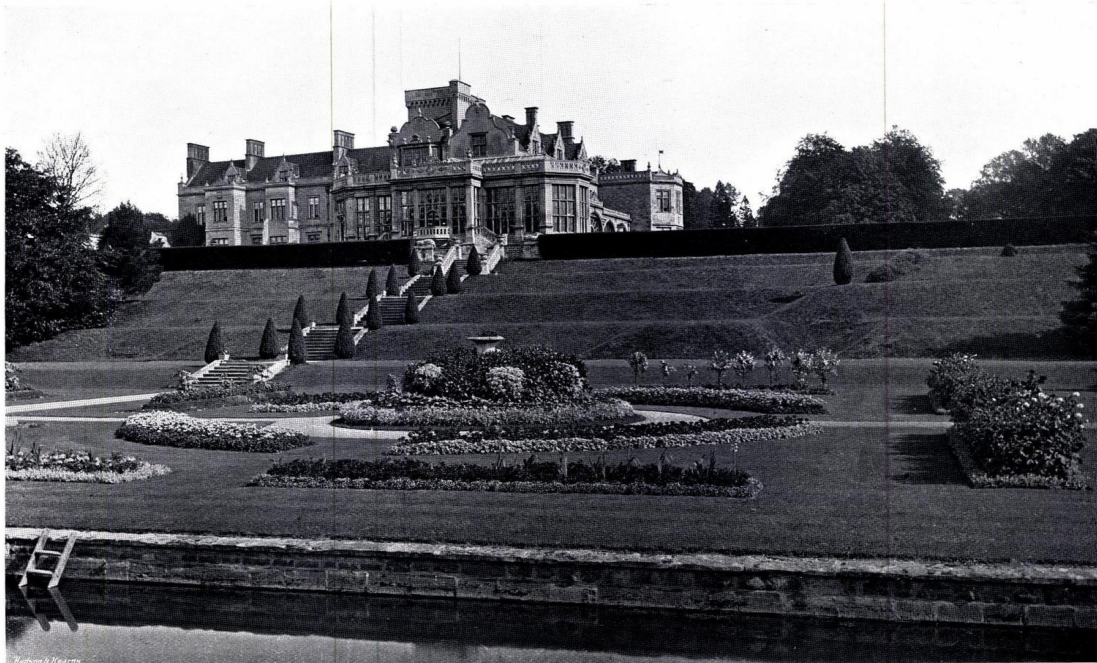
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THE TEMPLE WALK.

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contemplate Nature *dressed*, he would probably answer that he saw in it only Nature *shaved*. Now at Easton Hall Nature is certainly not over-dressed; neither is it shaved; there is a happy combination of effects such as we cannot but admire, and the house and the garden are as one.

On the south side lies a lovely expanse of turf, and there also, as part of the architectural creation, lying between the two bays of the structure, is the great conservatory. Then the Temple Walk leads through a very pleasant region of the garden, and the long terrace, with its hedges and slopes and its fine statuary, forms another attractive feature. But in short, wherever we go in such a garden as this, lying so advantageously in regard to situation, designed with so



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FLIGHTS OF STEPS.

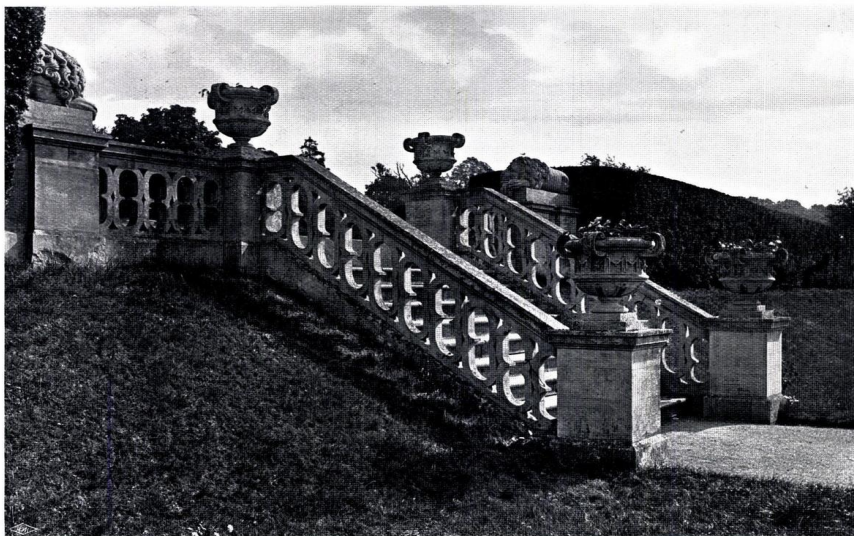
"COUNTRY LIFE."

much skill, and kept in such a state of perfection, we cannot fail to discover many charms and many beauties of the garden world. It has often been said in these pages that the character of the house should be borne out in its surroundings, and we see that this is eminently the case at Easton Hall. Architectural features are there to give point and character, without breaking the spell which springs from a rare and beautiful grouping of wood, lawn, water, and garden flowers.

IN THE . . GARDEN.

Mlle. Yonne Gravier Tea Rose.

WE have heard so much about this Tea Rose lately, although we confess to never having seen a flower, that we have sought out as much information as possible about it, and have discovered that a coloured plate was given of it in the *Garden* of March 19th, 1898, reproduced from flowers drawn at Gravetye, Sussex, the residence of Mr. W. Robinson. We are planting much of it, and hope for glorious groups of colour next summer. At any rate, the description published with the plate in the *Garden* referred to leads us to expect beautiful results from the groups we made last autumn. Mr. Robinson in writing about the Rose says: "Among the many Tea Roses we have tried in the open air unprotected at all seasons there have been many beautiful kinds distinguished by exquisite flowers, fine in form and colour, but among them all we think there has never been one so delicate in its refined colour as Mlle. Yonne Gravier, which, in



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addition to its great beauty, is also, as far as we have tried it, a good grower, flowering abundantly late in the year." M. Bernaix of Lyons, who raised it, says its blooming is extraordinary, and does not end until the frost comes. He describes the flower as large, the long bud of beautiful form, and its colour a rich creamy yellow. The back of the petals is a fine rose, a new tint difficult to describe, while the centre of the flower at the base of the petals is shaded with a pretty canary yellow. The Rose was named after the daughter of a former chief secretary of the Prefect of the Rhône.



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