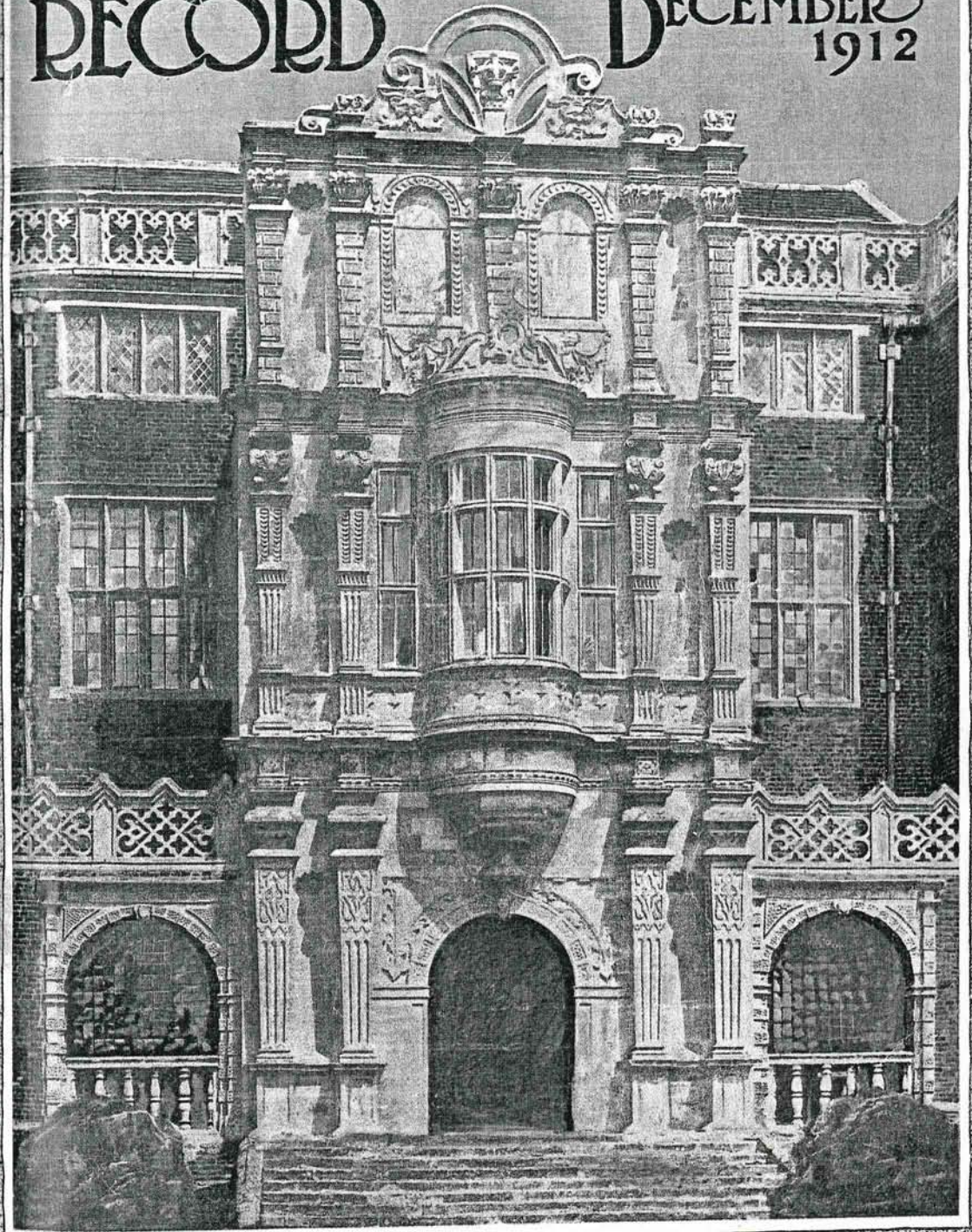
THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

DECEMBER 1912



PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK
25 CENTS A COPY, $3.00 A YEAR

THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF ARCHITECTURE AND THE ALLIED ARTS AND CRAFTS

INDEX-VOLUME XXXII

JULY-DECEMBER

1912

PUBLISHED BY
THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD CO.
11-15 EAST 24TH ST., NEW YORK

1411 MONADNOCK BUILDING, CHICAGO
BEHMER BUILDING, PITTSBURGH
[illegible] CHESTNUT ST., PHILADELPHIA
334 FEDERAL BANK BUILDING

"DARLINGTON," A JACOBEAN MANOR IN NEW JERSEY

JAMES BRITE, ARCHITECT.

By L. R. McCABE

THE LITERAL or quasi-grafting of Old World historic homes on to American soil, is one of the most significant phases in the development of modern domestic architecture, be its logical propriety what it may.

Large wealth naturally quickens its possessor with desire to be importantly, if not comfortably or artistically housed. In this day of facile print production and universal travel, "all the world and his wife" may have ocular, if not veritable, acquaintance with the originals of Old World historic homes. In consequence, when wealth selects for the model of its city palace or country house a Rhine castle, a French château or an English baronial hall, it is rarely without some knowledge of their architectural beauty if not adaptability to present day need.

Sentiment in the selection of an Old World model for a New World home plays a larger rôle than is generally credited, though to the architect, sentiment upon the part of a client, unhappily, is more often hindrance than inspiration. When sentiment, however, is wedded to fitness, which is only good taste in everyday use, and wealth retains as guide and executor, skilled architect, artistic builder and sympathetic decorator, why should not a Jacobean manor, for instance, take healthy root in New World soil and ripen into a public benefaction by reason of its beauties so rendered that "all who run may read."

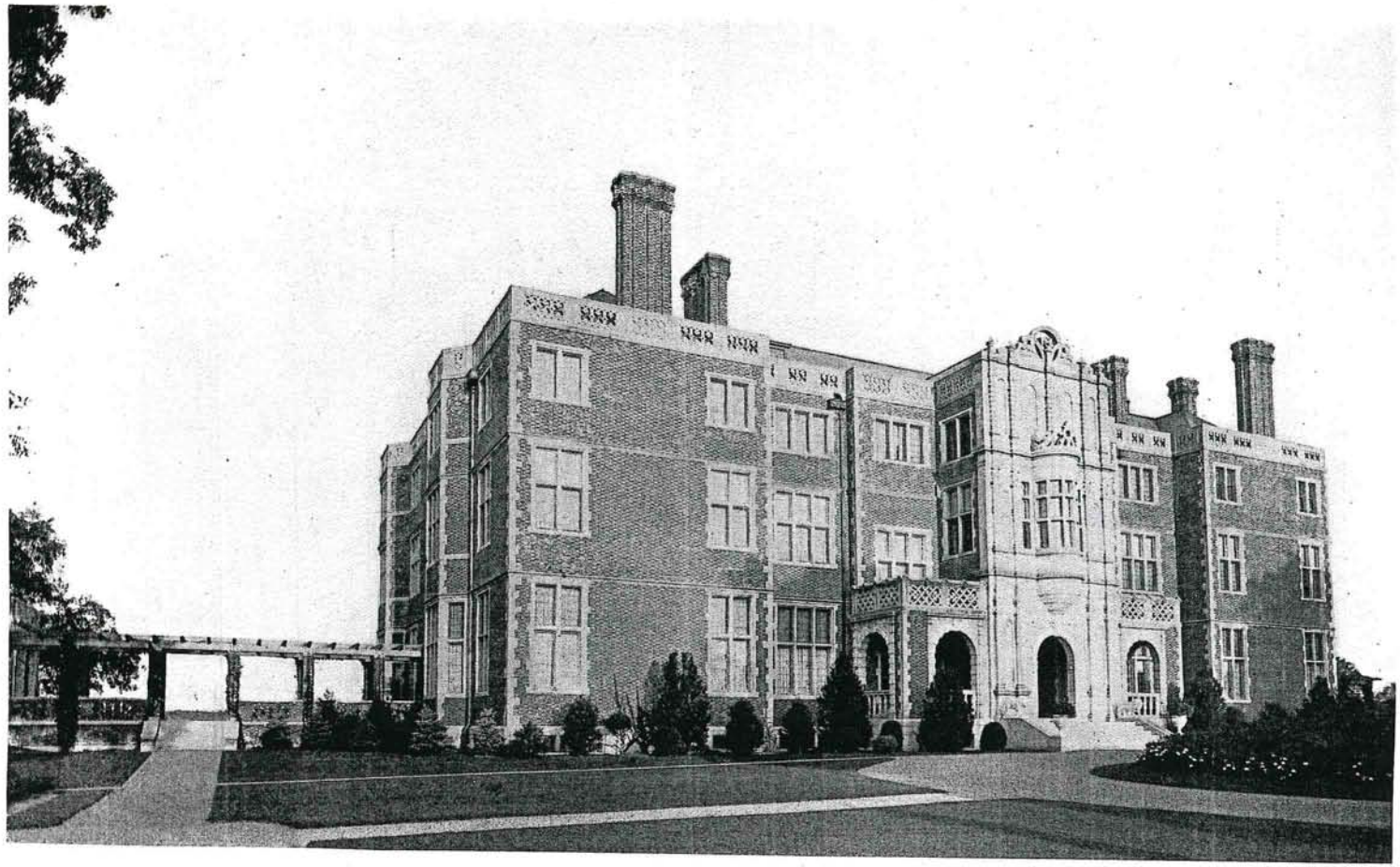
An experiment now in process of fruition is "Darlington," the country estate of the late Mr. George Crocker, today the property of Mr. Emerson McMillin, banker and art collector.

"Darlington" is one of the few pure structures of Jacobean precedent in the United States. It was begun in 1904 and finished in 1907. After five years' service it might have weathered Queen Bess's time, so remotely does it suggest newness, so appropriately does it fit into its frame—the Ramapo hills of New Jersey, with the Ramapo River winding through the hundred acres the mansion commands, the remaining thousand acres of the estate being largely virgin forest.

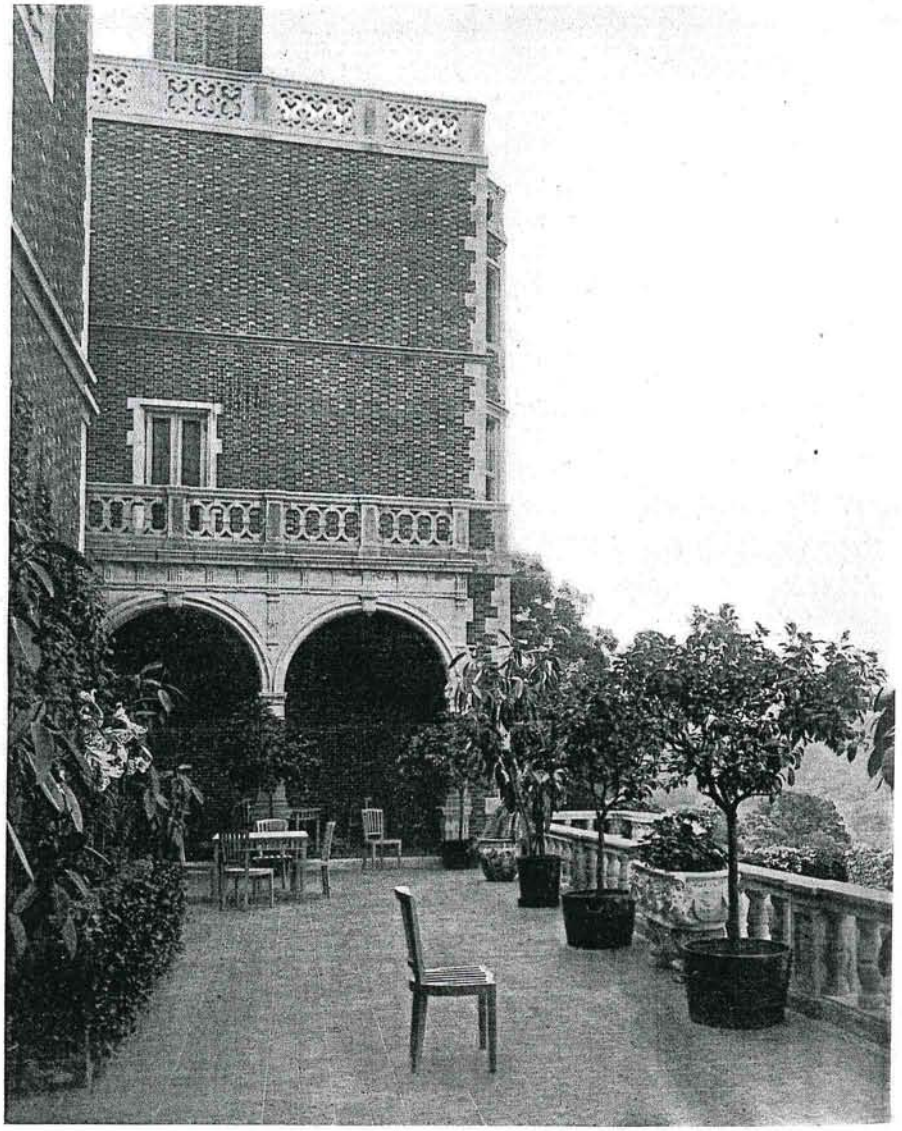
"Darlington" is modelled directly after Bramshill, Hampshire, one of the finest examples of Jacobean architecture. It is attributed to John Thorpe, architect. Despite it dates from two periods—early 17th, early 18th century—and has passed through many ownerships, unlike most structures of its day, it has suffered little from "modernizing."

"Bramshill" stands to-day as it was built in 1605-1612, when it came into the family of the present owner, Sir Robert Cope.

With Bramshill for model, Mr. James Brite designed "Darlington." That his is the distinction of never having studied abroad lends piquant interest to this notable achievement. Southern born, Mr. Brite is a product of the American Architectural League, being one of its early gold medalists. With Messrs. McKim, Mead & White he served his apprenticeship, entering their office when it had eleven draughtsmen, quitting it, to try his further fortunes alone, when the draughtsmen numbered 110. Beyond some twenty months' travel abroad, Mr. Brite has worked out his architectural career in New York. Although he has gone far, "Darlington" remains his most ambitious undertaking.



"DARLINGTON"—THE ENTRANCE FRONT.
JAMES BRITE, ARCHITECT.



"DARLINGTON"—THE TERRACE.
James Brite, Architect.

"It cost me much hard work, many heartaches, and no end of joy," he declares, "and it is good now to see how well 'Darlington' is wearing."

While to few architects or builders is given the opportunity "Darlington" afforded, there are to the humblest of the craft, great inspiration, and suggestion in the problems it solved, the effective merging of the arts in its decoration, the adoption of Old World conceits to New World conditions—the comfort and luxury of modern living.

Consider the front entrance of "Darlington" and the front entrance of Bramshill as shown on the cover. At first glance they are identical. The radical difference is in the wings; where there is depletion in Bramshill there is extension in "Darlington." This extension was

made to furnish space for the desired number of rooms, which exceeds that of Bramshill.

The front entrance to Bramshill is striking. It embodies the most notable stonework of the English Renaissance. The parapet of the roof consists of pierced panels, not the usual baluster. The whole of the front depends for effect upon a long, straight stretch of wall divided by flat bays and pierced with many mullioned windows. "Darlington" not only preserves the stone ornamentation, the sculptural decoration of Bramshill's front to minutest detail, but enriches it. The house is built of "Harvard" brick trimmed with Indiana limestone, material unknown to English architecture of any period. The plan is H shape, with a center flanked by projecting wings. Its greatest length is 143 feet, and the depth of the wings is 102 feet. The area is greatly extended by the pergolas on either side, north and south, which are an integral part of the structure. The entire area covered by the mansion is about 290 feet by 127 feet.

DETAIL-MODEL FOR WOOD-CARVING—"DARLINGTON."
James Brite, Architect.

The terrace, or garden front, as it is called in England, first seen upon entering the estate, overlooks a series of terraces, while the main entrance is on the opposite side, the approaching driveway sweeping round the mansion to the entrance terrace. This entrance terrace is supported by a massive stone wall surmounted by a balustrade. The entrance bay is faced with limestone and is rich in sculptural ornamentation. A loggia serves as an entrance porch.

Mr. Brite's originality or adaptability is happily disclosed in "Darlington's" terrace front. Here the resemblance to Bramshill's garden front is so modified as to almost lose its identity with the original.

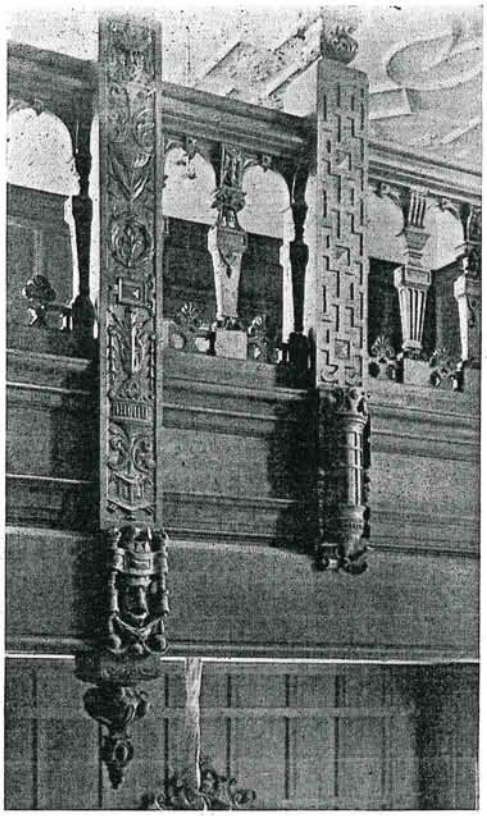
In place of Bramshill's three gabled roof projection — additions made at various periods —"Darlington" has a modified mansard roof with the straight parapet finish of Bramshill's front entrance. The one break in the long, straight stretch of wall, is a center broad projection from cellar to chimney base, giving the effect of a huge flat Maryland chimney. This projection affords the interior of the Great Hall a two-story inglenook.

However the gabled roofs of Bramshill's successive additions may have fitted in pictorially with its informal garden they would hardly have been in keeping with "Darlington's" formal terrace front, which recalls in its studied lines the Luxemburg or Versailles.

It is interesting to note the introduction of the motive of the oriel window of the front elevation in the wood-carving of the right-hand baluster-post.

Here house and landscape architects have effectively worked into each other's feeling, with the result that the straight balustrade lines of the roof are in harmony with the white terraced walks leading down to the white stone framed lily pond, in which house and terrace garden are reflected.

The interior of "Darlington" is not a whit less interesting than Bramshill's, whose 17th century ceiling and 18th century panelling it reproduces. Unlike the exterior, the interior has a number of departures from the pure Elizabethan of the Great Hall, the staircases and the breakfast room. To the untimely passing of Mrs. Crocker before the house was under roof, may be attributed the Georgian dining-room and the library



DETAIL OF WOOD-CARVING, STAIR-HALL —"DARLINGTON."
James Brite, Architect.

of French rather than Italian Renaissance. In taking these liberties with his model, the architect evidently accorded with the English commentator who declares: "Whoever planned Bramshill, whether Thorpe or another, would have to modify his ideas very considerably were he to rise from his grave with view of pursuing his former occupation successfully."

"Darlington's" first story is occupied with the general and public rooms. The main doorway opens into the entrance hall from which begins the grand stairway by which the upper floors are reached. This main doorway like all the doorways of the first floor, is after the manner of Bramshill, the lofty square opening of Queen Anne's time.

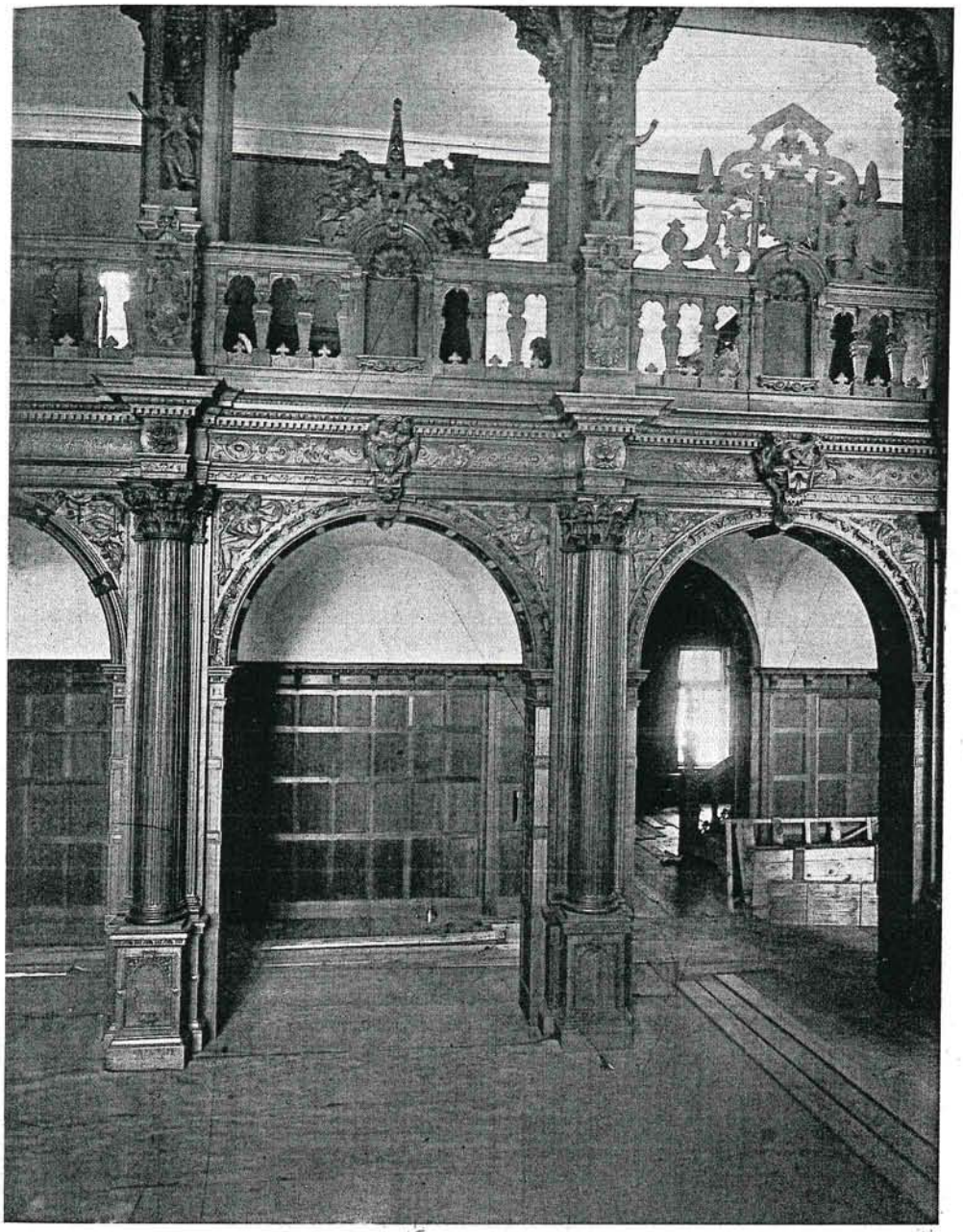
Beyond the entrance hall and separated from it by an imposing corridor that runs across the mansion, north to south, connecting the five great rooms of the interior is "Darlington's" most distinctive feature—the Great Hall. The center of this corridor serves as an outer part of the Great Hall opening into it by arches and having a roof of groined vaults after that of a cloister walk.

In the south wing to the right are the dining-room and the breakfast room, in the north wing, to the left are the drawing-room and the library. To the right of the stairway are a lavatory, servants' stairway, flower room (refrigerated for preservation of flowers used for interior decoration), and pantry; on the left are a coat room and office.

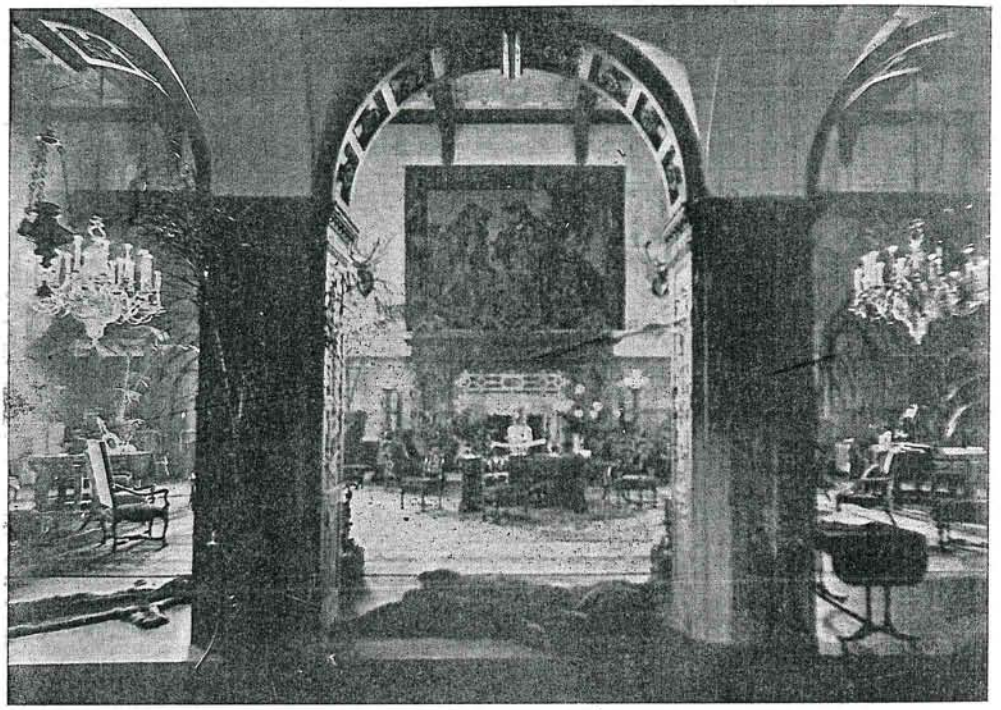
This entire first floor interior is wholly finished in wood as are all the halls, corridors and the family suites.

No private house in the United States, perhaps, is so rich in carvings wrought by hand out of solid wood. Many varieties of wood contribute to the rich, sombre beauty and solidity of the whole; American quartered white

DETAIL, MODEL FOR WOOD-CARVING IN THE STAIR-HALL—"DARLINGTON."
James Brite, Architect.



DETAIL OF WOOD-CARVING,
"DARLINGTON"—THE HALL.
JAMES BRITE, ARCHITECT.



"DARLINGTON"—LOOKING INTO THE GREAT HALL.
James Brite, Architect.

oak, English oak, cherry, Circassian walnut, English walnut and California redwoods.

In a day of rapid building and keen competition, it is good to consider the experimental care and infinite pains with which "Darlington's" interior was thought out and executed.

The Great Hall is an imposing room 80 feet long and 45 feet wide, extending through two stories to the height of 30 feet, without counterpart in modern domestic architecture. The walls are encased in Enville stone. Three sides have a high oak wainscot while the entrance wall is a two-story balcony in American white oak. The screen of this balcony is solidly carved in Elizabethan designs, completing decoration rare as it is beautiful.

The wood of the entire Great Hall is American quartered white oak. The original color is a light tone. To secure its present silvery grey tint, the wood before it was carved or set in place, was put into a hermetically sealed room, encased with pipes charged with ammonia as in a refrigerating plant. The wood was left there until thoroughly permeated with the ammonia fumes. It was only after repeated experiments that it was discovered that a two-hour exposure was sufficient to secure the desired silvery grey tint. This time limit determined, all the wood used in the Great Hall was subjected to the hermetically sealed ammonia rooom.

The motif of the decoration both in plaster and wood is the Tudor rose. Aside from the plaster the ceiling has carved oak beams and cross beams, with elaborately carved pendants. The pendants are carved out of the solid wood of the beam, not done in bits and glued on as obtains in most ceilings of this type constructed for effect rather than endurance. The panels formed by these beams are of plaster, modeled in flat relief and tinted to harmonize with the character of the hall.

All the wood carving was done in Philadelphia and set up in the house by

master cabinet-makers. The plaster modeling of the ceiling was cast in sections and applied to a light steel backing. The sill of the gallery at the south and entering the library is hand carved out of Uriel stone, a material rarely used.

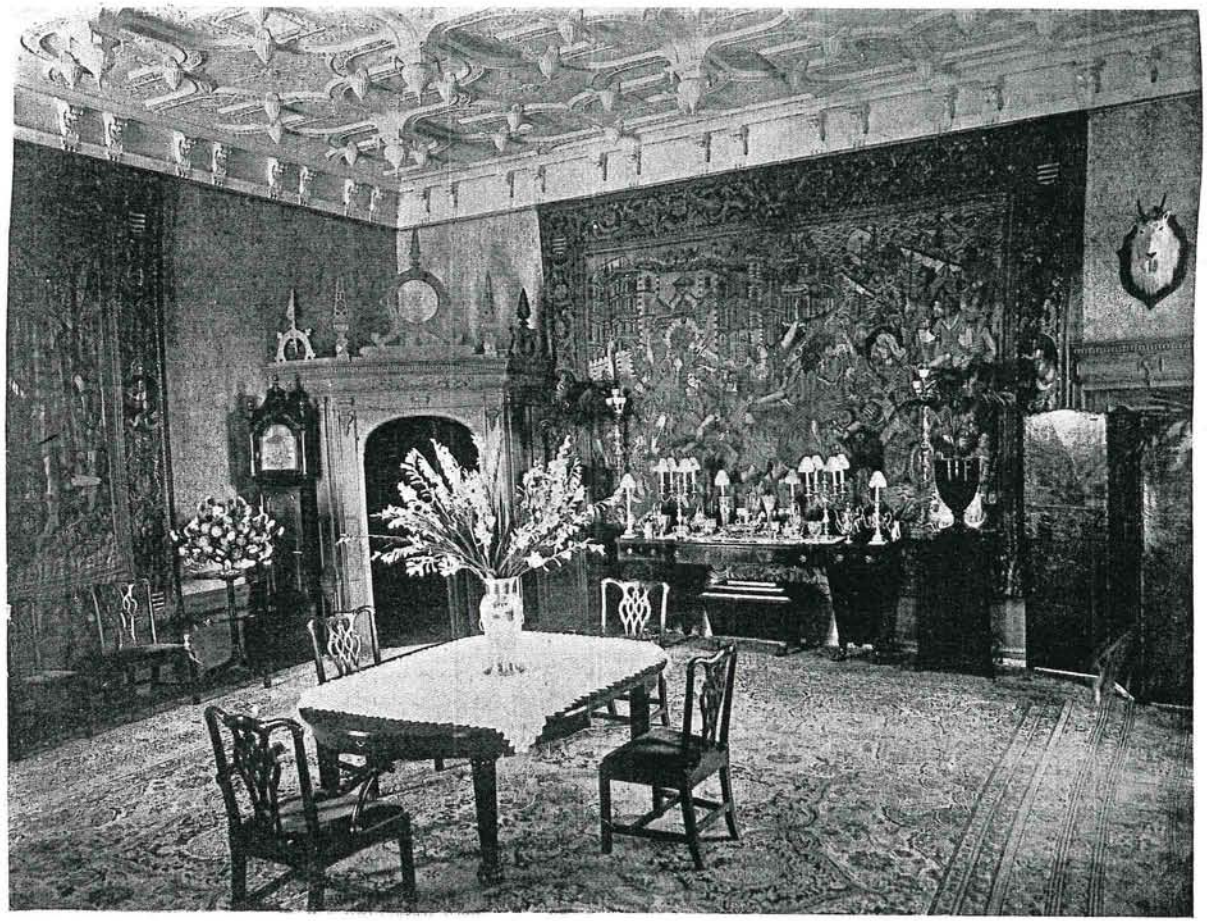
In the second story is a corridor surrounding three sides of the Great Hall. This corridor serves the double purpose of yielding further space to the interior of the Great Hall and affording access to the guest chambers and family rooms on the second floor. On the longer side of this upper corridor are the openings in the oak gallery screen; at each end of the corridor are arches with Caen stone frames richly carved. To enter the Great Hall under the carved screen balcony is to confront the "inglenook." This spacious and attractive feature fills the projection beyond the main hall. It is practically the inside of the Maryland chimney that breaks the straight stretch of the terrace front wall. This inglenook contains a fireplace with mantel and overmantel. The latter are of Caen stone, inlaid with colored marbles. On either side of the inglenook are tall triple windows reaching from floor to ceiling. The lower casements open onto the balcony without and bring the Great Hall into immediate connection with the terrace front. Above the overmantel concealed by a tapestry is the echo-board of the great organ that fills a goodly part of the south wall.

The staircases of "Darlington" are no less monumental than pictorial. With all the spacious suggestiveness of Elizabethan days, the grand stairway leads to an upper foyer hall by which the corridors that enclose the Great Hall are reached. The stair wall is panelled in oak to the roof, and the richly carved balustrade is carried to the summit of the third floor.

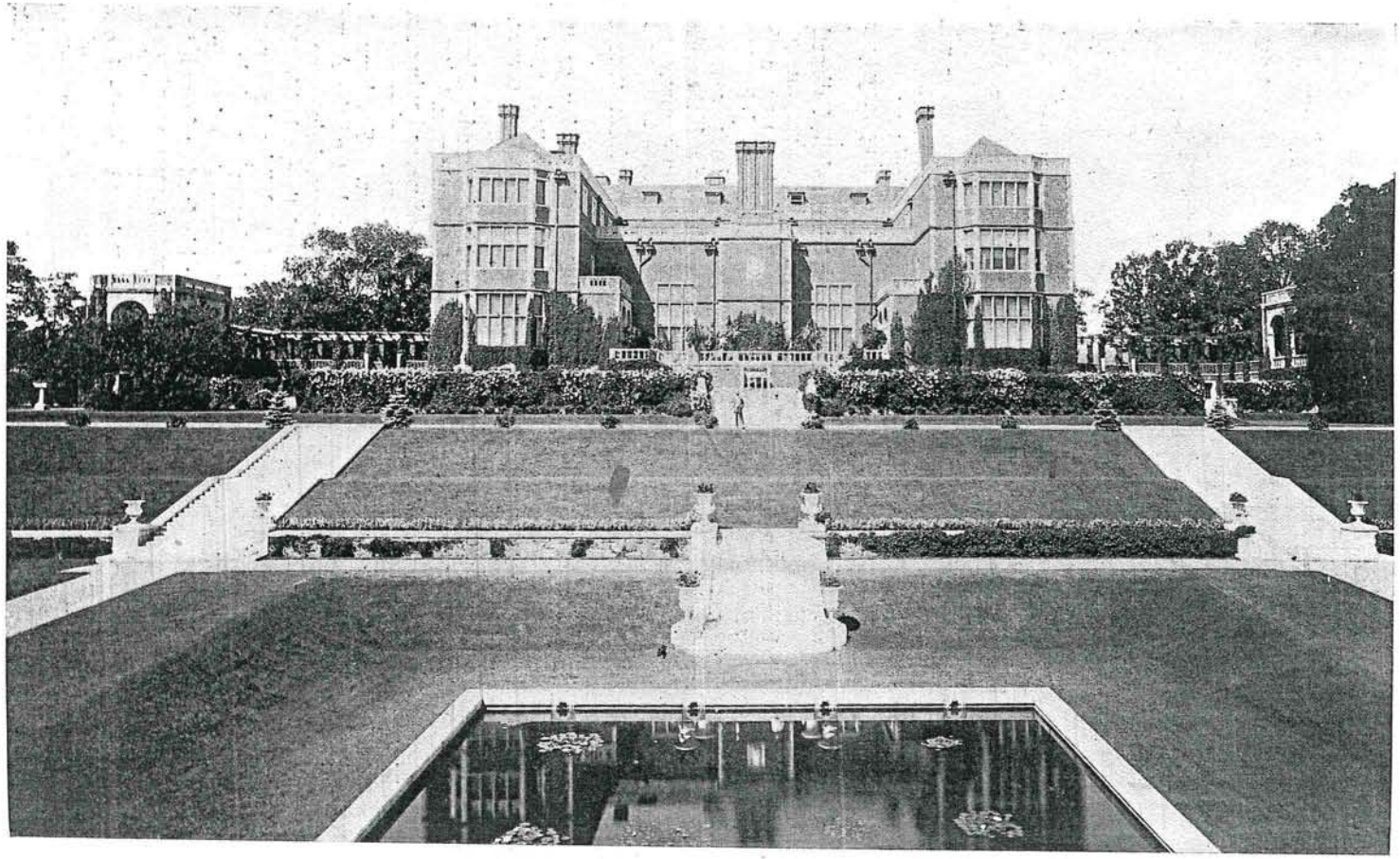
The foyer hall with a geometrical ceiling in plaster (Tudor rose motif) opens into an elevated recess which contains the oriel window-feature of Oriel College, Oxford—that is such a charm-

THE GREAT HALL—"DARLINGTON."
James Brite, Architect.

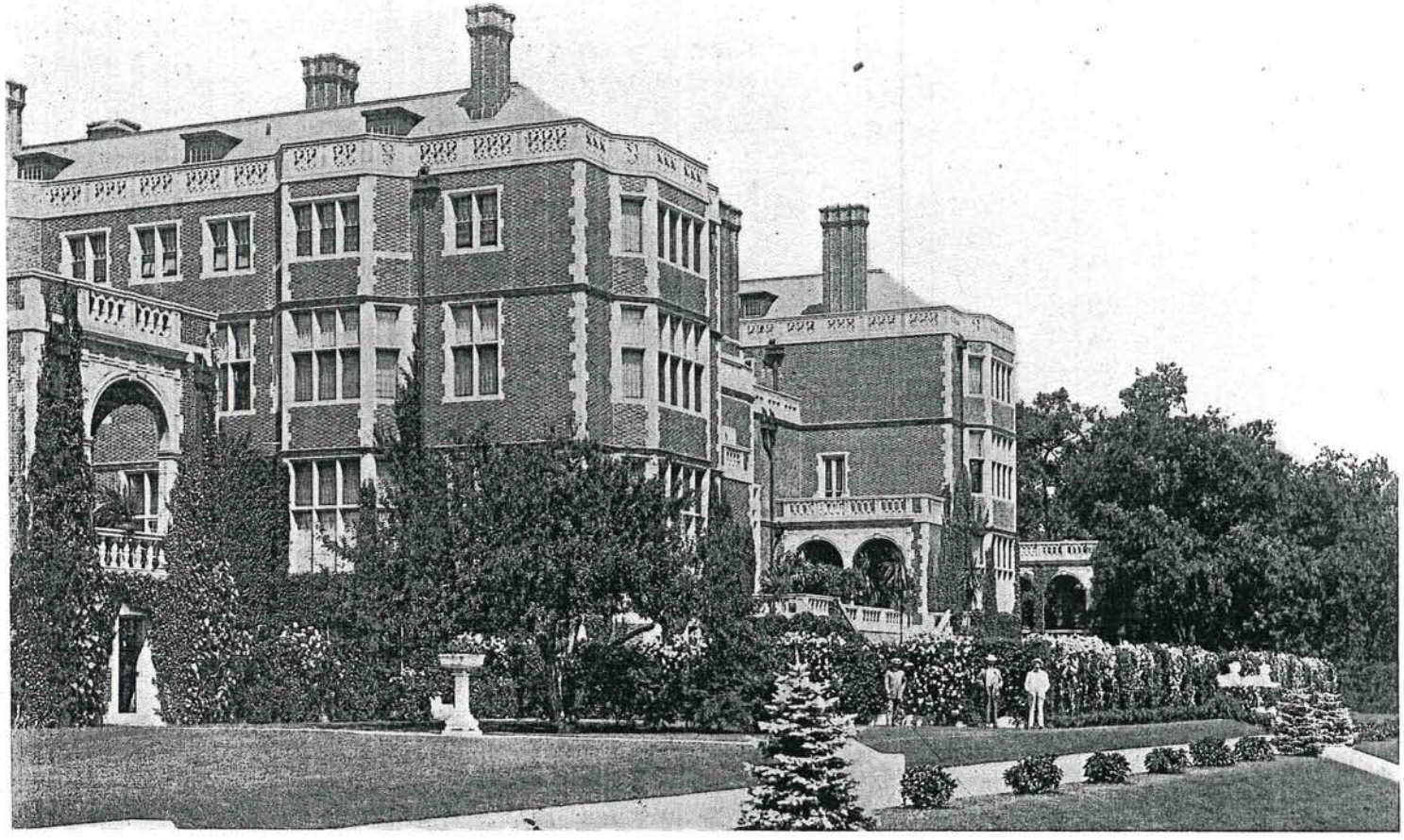
"DARLINGTON"—THE LIBRARY.
JAMES BRITE, ARCHITECT.



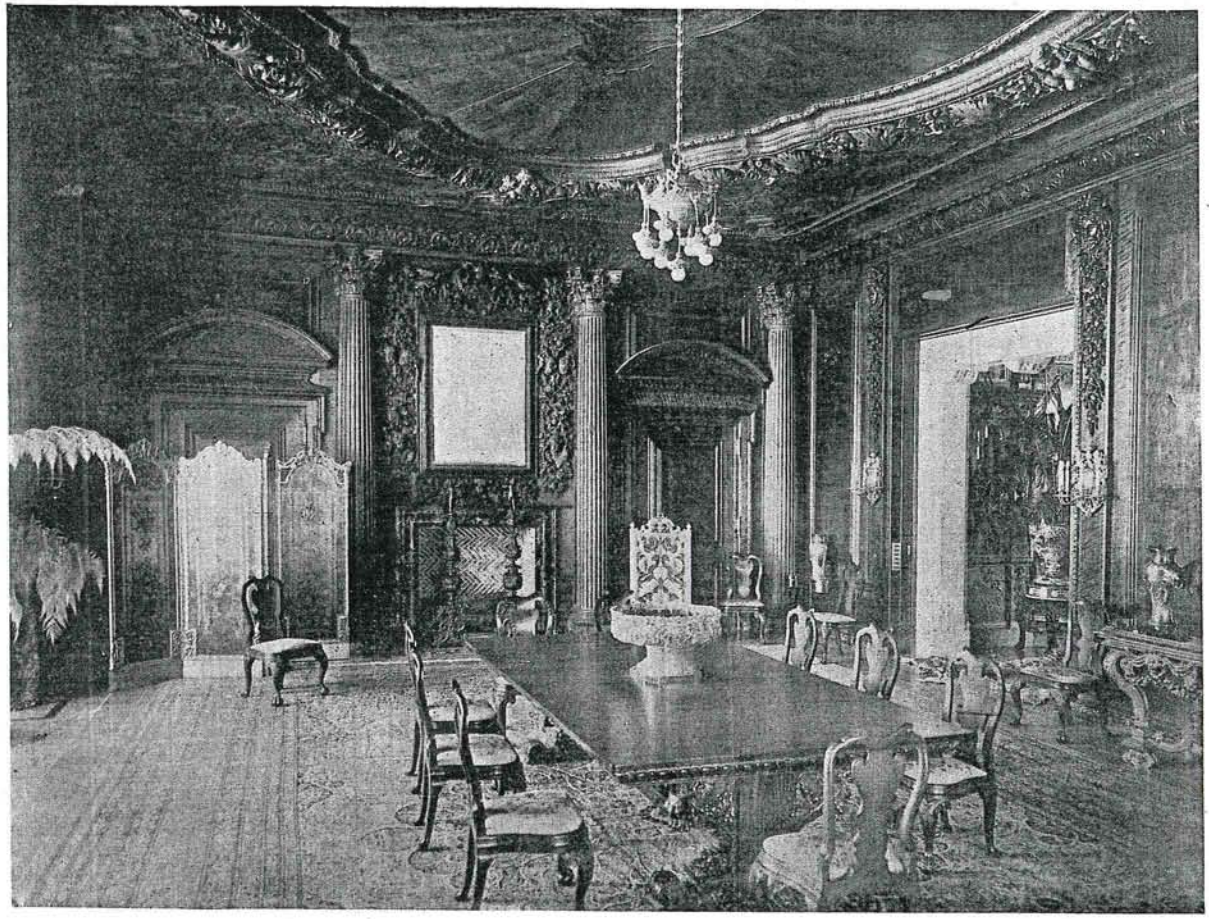
"DARLINGTON"—THE BREAKFAST ROOM.
JAMES BRITE, ARCHITECT.



"DARLINGTON"—THE GARDEN FRONT.
JAMES BRITE, ARCHITECT.



"DARLINGTON"—THE GARDEN FRONT.
JAMES BRITE, ARCHITECT.



"DARLINGTON"—THE DINING ROOM.
JAMES BRITE, ARCHITECT.

ing note of the entrance front. This oriel window is repeated in one of the key arches of the balcony screen of the Great Hall and elsewhere.

With California redwood as interior decoration Eastern architects and builders are practically unfamiliar, so rarely is it used this side of the Mississippi. Nowhere is its beauty and utility so richly or effectively demonstrated as in "Darlington's" dining-room of Georgian splendor.

Three varieties of redwood are used; the burl, which is the root of the tree; the straight, and the curled grain. The markings which lend such varied beauty is secured by a peculiar way of sawing the wood.

The walls are a series of great panels with moulded frames, between which are pilasters carved in high relief. These pilasters support cornices, also elaborately carved, and which give way, at the end, to Corinthian columns. Over the fireplace of black, green and brown marbles, is an elaborately carved redwood overmantel. This huge and elaborate oral design is carved out of a solid block of redwood, and is the work of an Italian of twenty-six.

The floor is patterned after a ship's deck with wide pieces separated by narrow strips of white caulking.

The dominant note of the library is the ceiling of exposed beams and rafters, the latter closely set and the whole painted by James Wall Finn after the style of the Italian Renaissance.

Unlike Bramshill, where access to servants' quarters at one time necessitated making a circuit of the entire building or emerging into the open air, "Darlington" reserves on the third floor of the south wing at the end of a corridor, opening into or shut off at will from guest chambers, twelve bedrooms and a bath for domestics. Theirs by pressure of button are the heat, light, telephone and elevator service of the master.

But nowhere is the vantage of the present over the past so obviously brought home as in "Darlington's" huge basement. Where Bramshill's cellar housed for centuries lanterns, tallow dips, forest faggots, wooden vessels for the distribution of light, heat and water through personal service of human slaveys, its American reincarnation is a storehouse of miracle workers in the comfort and luxury of modern domestic life.

There are boilers to radiate steam to heat, ice to cool, there is electric plant distributing through wires in iron conduits not only light to myriads of make-believe candles, heat to make-believe logs, but power to turn laundry machines, ice cream freezers, vacuum sweepers that connect on every floor.

Where Bramshill's successive masters communicated with greenhouses, overseer's office, or coach stables through an old fog horn or slow footed courier, "Darlington" has telephone connection with every outlying house of the estate, and their number is legion.

Is it not significant that in this Elizabethan structure, with détours into Georgian architecture, French and Italian Renaissance, America's ingenuity should be concentrated in the root of the whole—the basement? For steam, electricity, telephone, vacuum sweepers as utilized in the modern home, are they not all American inventions?