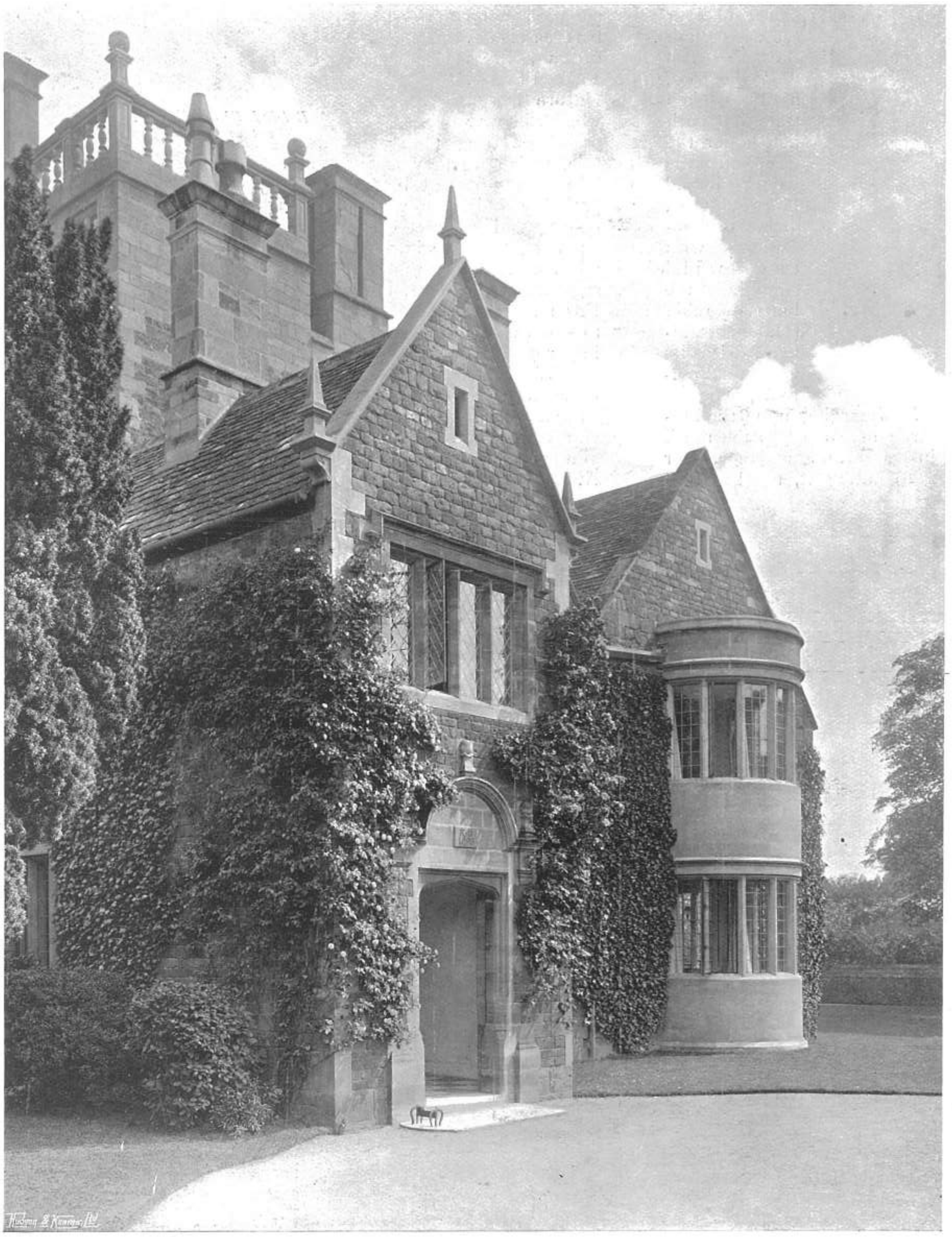
COVNTRY HOMES

THE CASTLE HOUSE, DEDDINGTON,

THE RESIDENCE OF . . .
MR. H. R. FRANKLIN.

OXFORDSHIRE is rich in survivals of ancient architecture, ecclesiastical and lay, and its little towns and rural parishes are humble but worthy companions to its capital and University. Fine churches there are by the score. Thatch or stone-tiled roofs, finialled gables and mullioned windows appear plentifully in many a village street. Witney and Burford in the west, Dorchester and Ewelme in the south, Wheatley and Beckley in the east and Adderbury and Deddington in the north have their differences of size and local character, but are all alike in retaining much pleasant old-world feeling. Of these Adderbury, which lies three miles south of Banbury, is perhaps the most striking, owing to the nobility of its church and the number of its houses—of considerable size and pretension—dating from the Jacobean age. Deddington is its near neighbour to the south, and if its church is less exceptional and its dwellings, as a rule, somewhat simpler and more humble, yet it possesses a most pleasant street of stone-tiled roofs and mullioned windows, and has one edifice of special interest and distinction—the old rectorial manor, now called the Castle House.



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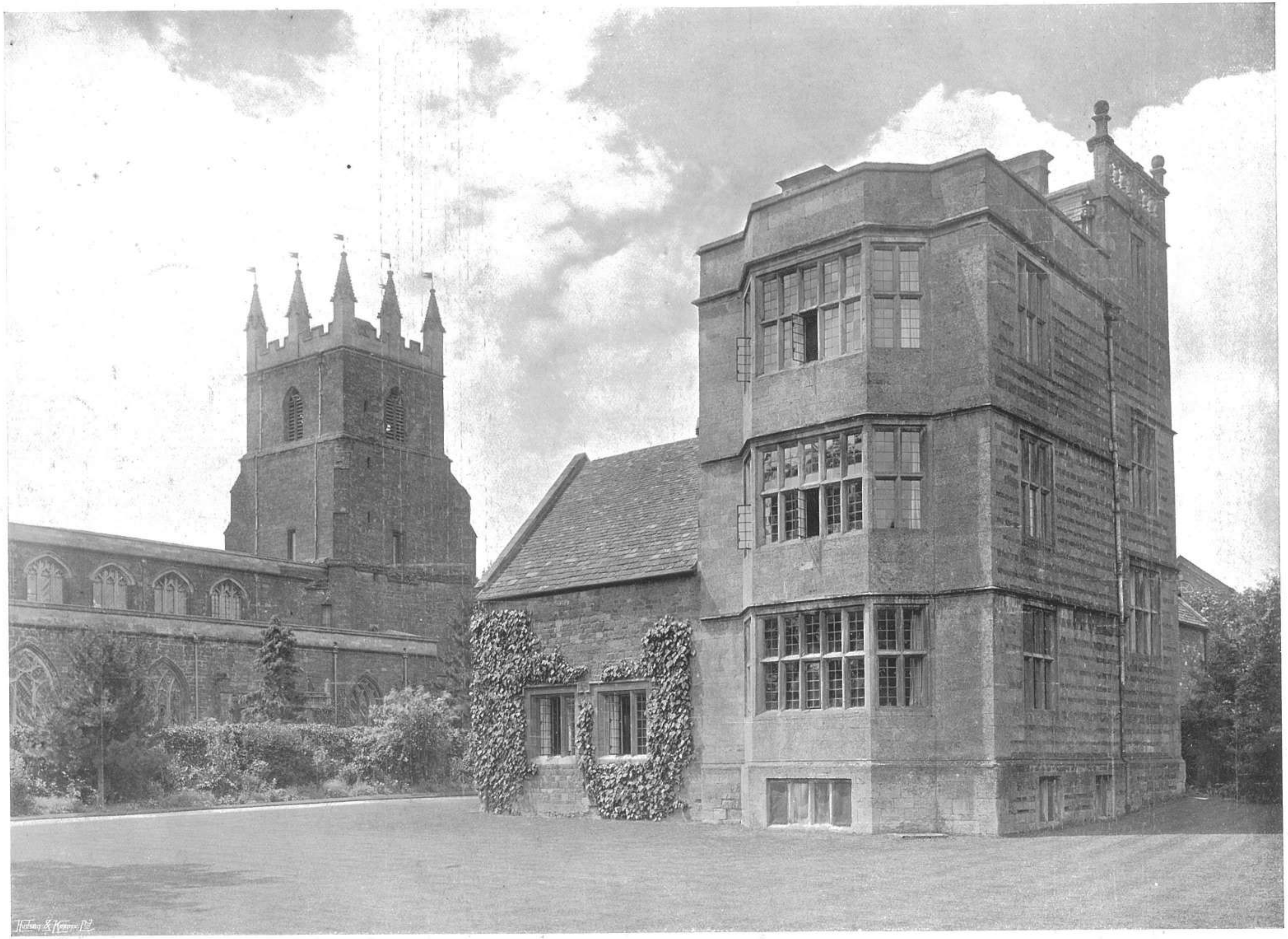
Deddington, quiet little place as it now seems, is no village, but an ancient market town, and its antiquity is undeniable, since Brightuuinus de Daedintun witnessed a charter when Edward the Confessor was King. At the Conquest it was one of the host of manors which William bestowed on his half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, but after his time it has an involved history, and its manorial rights "had a threefold division, by which as many separate manors have been formed, and so 'the third part of the manor of Deddington' is the common description in grants or other transactions in the fourteenth century." Henry IV.'s marriage with the co-heiress of Humphrey de Bohun brought one of these sections to the Duchy of Lancaster, which still holds it. This is called the Duchy Manor. Another is known as the Christ Church Manor. It was the gift of Philip Basset to the Priory of Bicester in the thirteenth century. As one of the lesser monasteries, the Bicester house was dissolved in 1536, and the Deddington manor was granted to that famous acquirer of Church property, Sir Thomas Pope, through whom the family of North still own the neighbouring Abbey of Wroxton. Deddington, however, he did not retain. The King bought it back eight years later and conveyed it to the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Oxford. The third section of Deddington was the rectorial manor, and it was assigned, together with the advowson, by William de Bohun in 1351 to "the free chapel of St. George the Martyr, situate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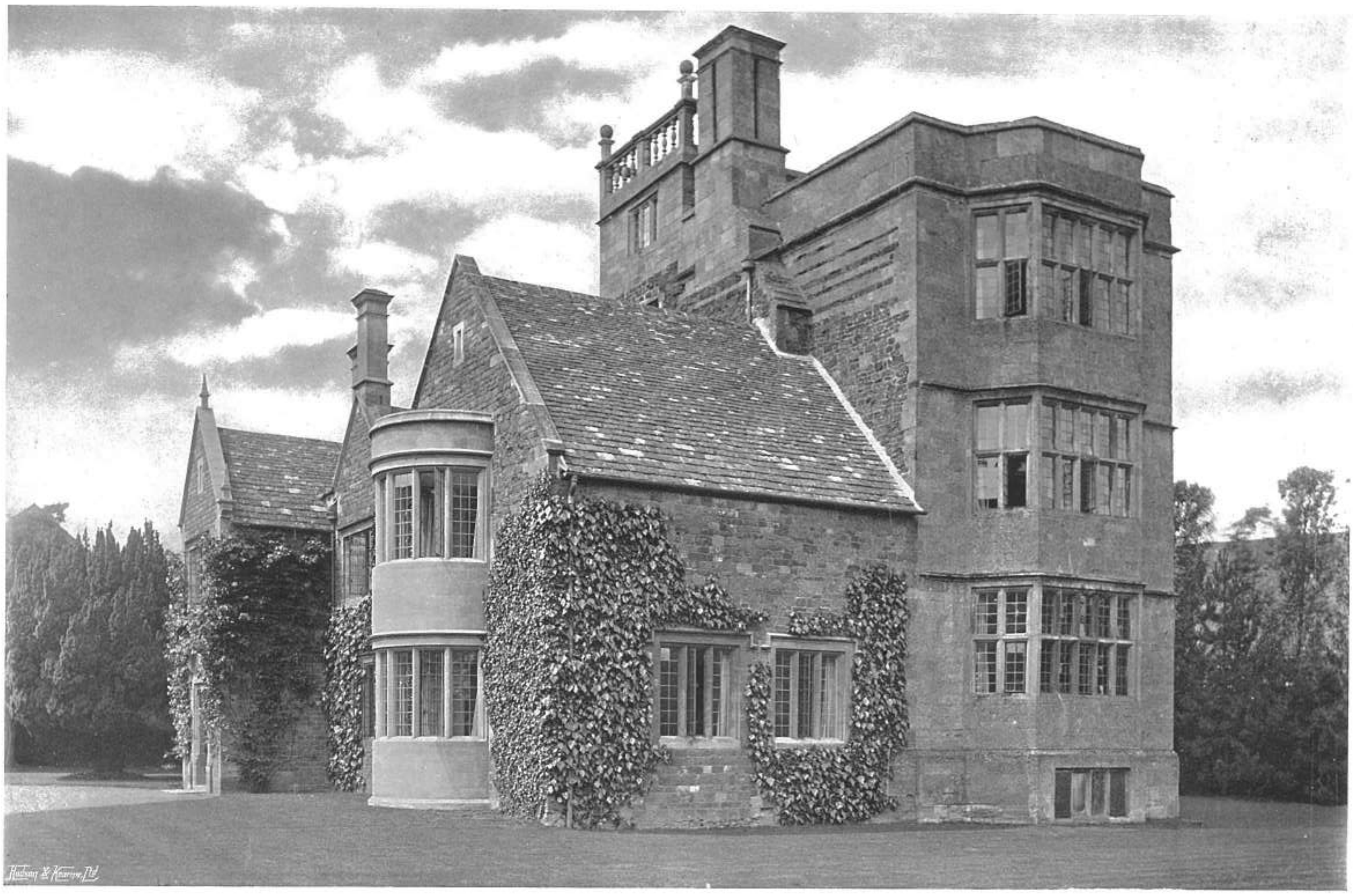
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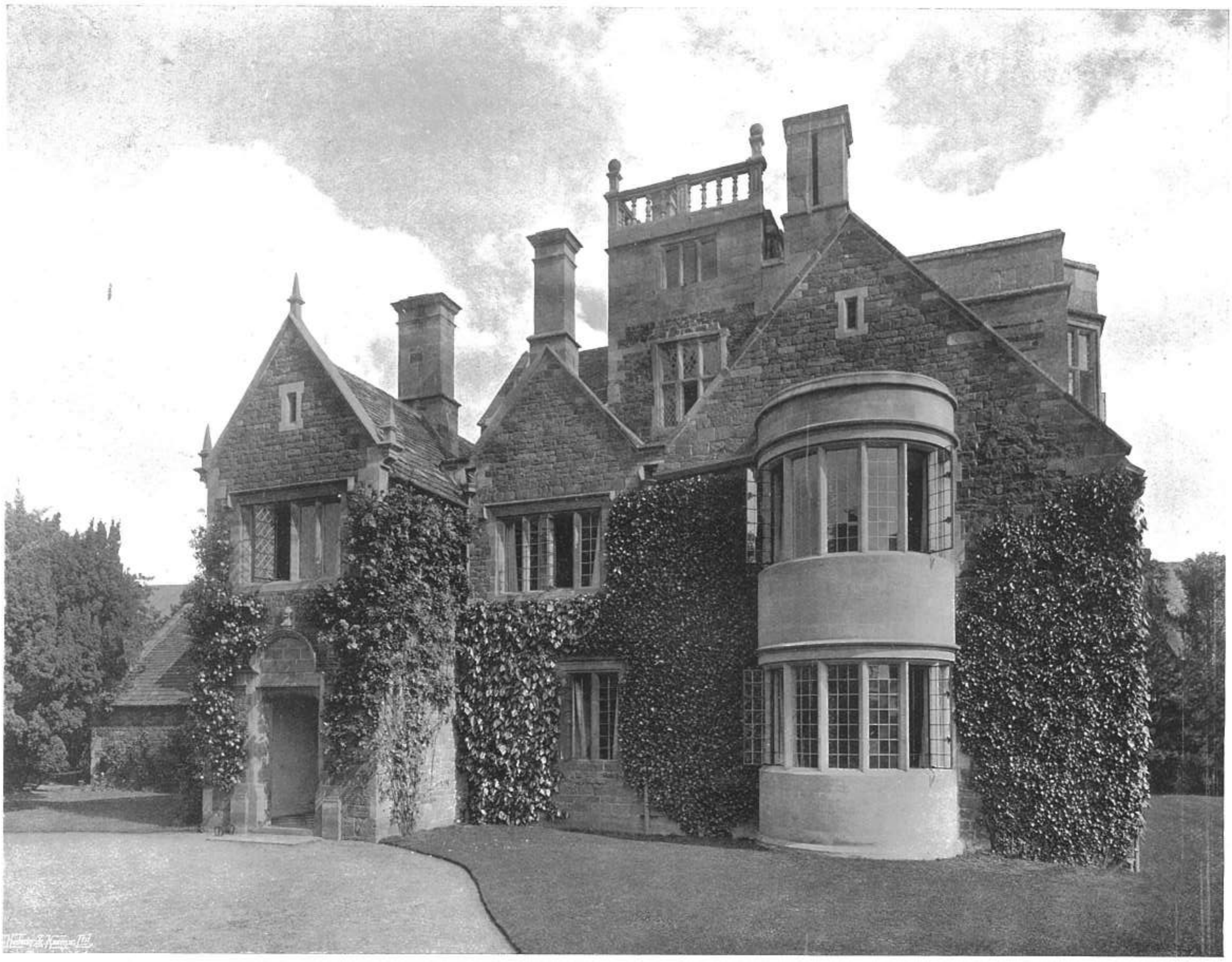
Copyright CASTLE HOUSE: THE OLD AND THE NEW. "COUNTRY LIFE."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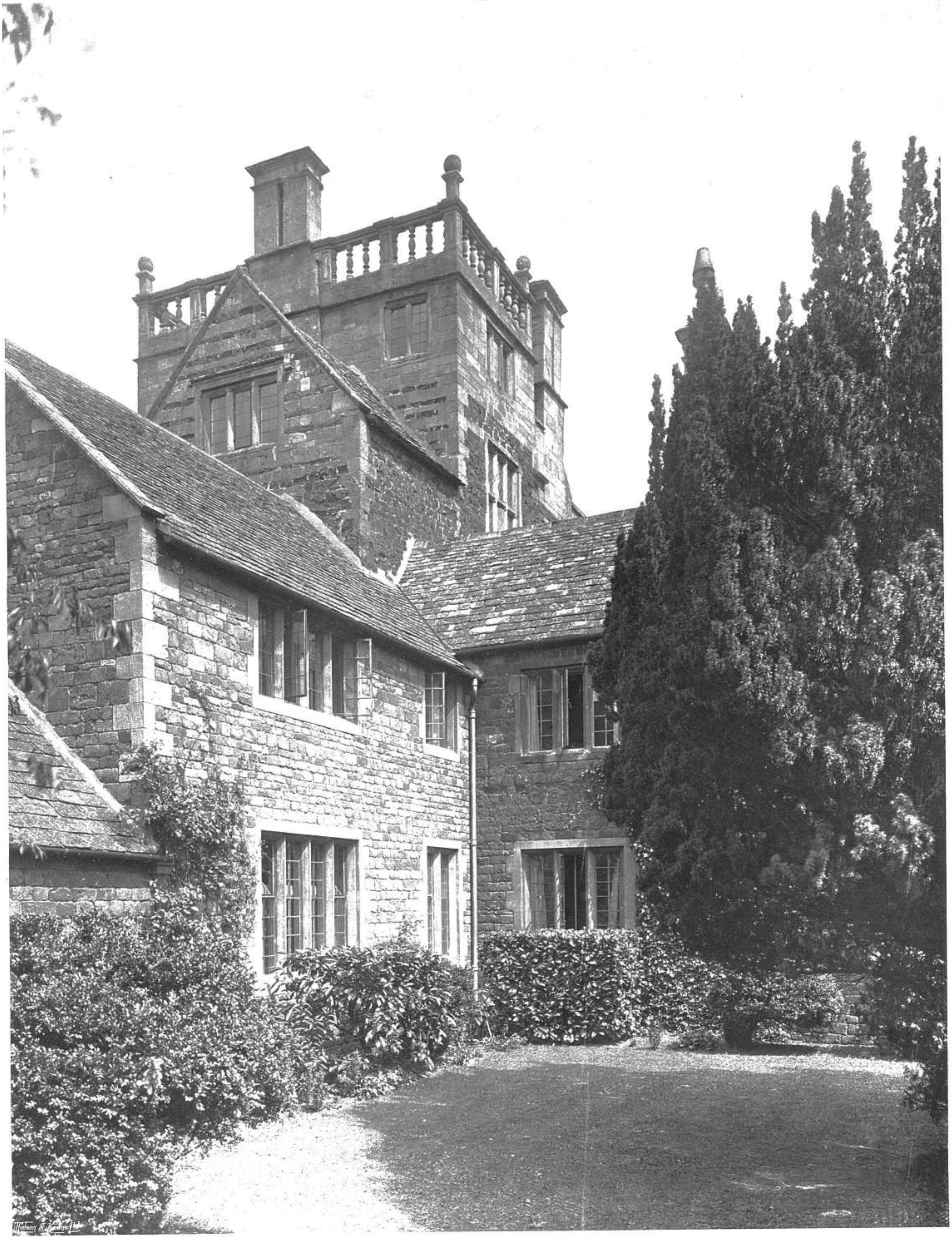
in the Castle of Windsor." When such foundations were dissolved by the Act of Edward VI., this free chapel was excepted, and the Dean and Canons of Windsor still hold a Deddington manor, and appoint the vicar. This manor, however, and the right of presentation were often demised on leases sufficiently long to make it worth the tenant's while to build on the estate, which lies north and east of the church, and comprises the present rectorial manor house and the site of the castle. Deddington Castle is now represented by an embankment in a grass field, and it has almost as little known history as visible substance. It is mentioned in the thirteenth century, and though local tradition attributes it to the Saxons and to the Danes, to Offa the King and to Æthelflaed lady of the Mercians, it is probably of thirteenth century date. It was never a place of much strength, for we hear that hither, after he had surrendered to the Earl of Pembroke on promise of safety, Piers Gaveston was brought in 1312, it being a spot "where no natural hiding-place, nor any castle or stronghold made by art could conceal him from the near presence of the Earl of Warwick." This Earl, whom he had nicknamed the "black dog," hated him and swore the "witch's son should feel the black dog's teeth." So when Pembroke was asleep, Warwick arrived with a band of armed retainers, seized Gaveston and carried him off to a summary beheading. The presence of the castle site



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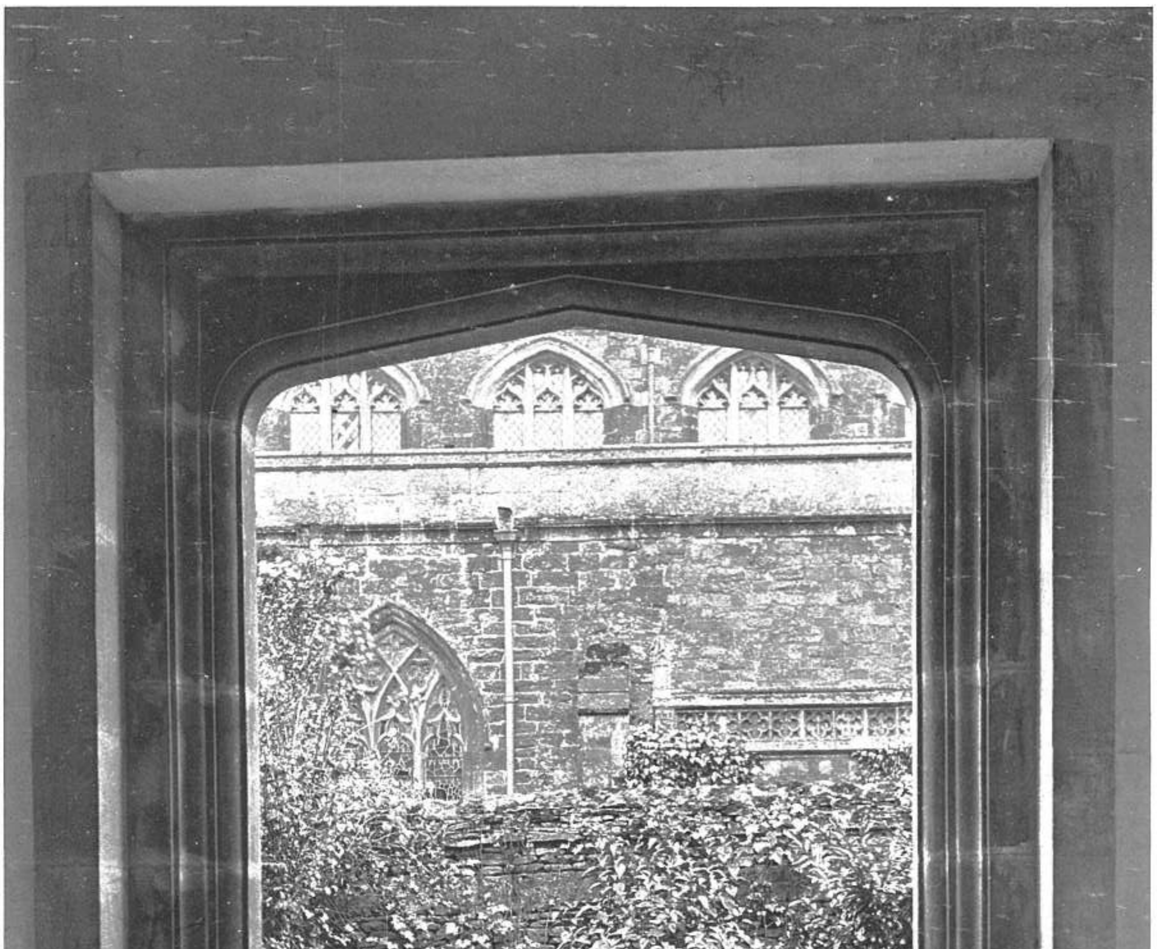

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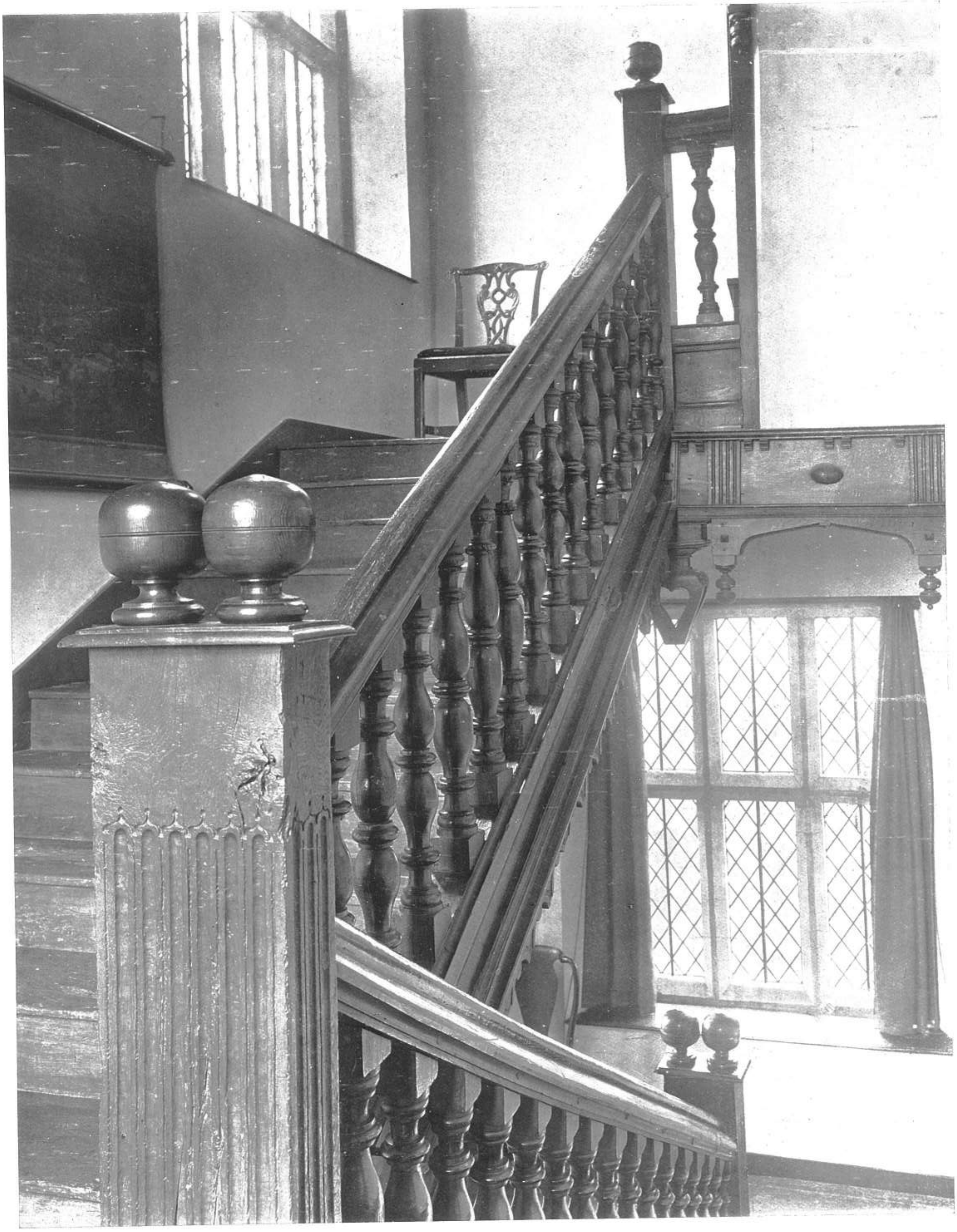
on the Windsor Manor gave to this holding the name of the Castle Farm, and as the ancient rectorial house, which stands north of the church, was inhabited by the farmer of the land, it was long known as the Castle Farm House. It is the subject of our illustrations, having been recently much repaired and altered by Mr. H. R. Franklin, whose admirable restoration of Yarnton Manor, near Oxford, under the advice of the late Mr. Garner, was noticed by us three years ago. As to the house at Deddington, it lacks history as much as the Castle does. Mr. Marshall, who wrote an account of the parish for the North Oxfordshire Archæological Society thirty years ago, has nothing to say about it beyond the fact of its existence, and Mr. Falkner, who wrote on Oxfordshire in 1899, merely calls it "a strange semi-castellated building." Where the "castellation" comes in we cannot imagine, and as to the "strangeness," this probably arises from the house consisting of two parts built at different dates. The low south front, facing the church, is the older of the two. It was in a somewhat ruinous condition when Mr. Franklin took it in hand, and its original features are somewhat obscured by much necessary new work. The semi-circular bay of smooth white ashlar is rather too grand and conspicuous to consort comfortably with the old walling of local rubble stone of warm brown colouring out of which it projects. The porch, too, if not an entirely new feature, is a piece of new building, but the hall window between these two projections is in its original condition and inclines one to place this portion of the house as belonging to the earlier years of Elizabeth, the windows, though square-headed, retaining some Gothic feeling in the drip stone. The other portion of the house, the "strange tower-like edifice with flat balustraded roof," as Murray's Guide Book calls it, is clearly the work of a man with larger and more sumptuous ideas, who, if he could not build a Hatfield or a Castle Ashby, could at least put up a bit of one. As one wing of an E-shaped mansion, its proportions would have been excellent; but, standing up against the low and gabled older portion, it is a little incongruous and gaunt, though the whole effect of the grouping is picturesque and the great height is balanced by the proximity of the church and accounted for by the close neighbourhood of the houses in the street, which makes space valuable. The rain-water-heads on this part of the house bear the initials T.A.M. and the date 1654. This would be late for the character of the building, unless it were something of a survival of an older style, and we incline to the belief that the rain-water-heads were an after-thought, and that the building dates from the reign of James I. In this case it would have been in one of its dignified, bay-windowed rooms that Charles I. slept, if he slept here at all. He defeated Waller at Cropredy Bridge on Saturday, June 29th, 1644, but was not strong enough to pursue his advantage. He therefore drew off south, and we read in Symond's Diary, "The King lay at Dedington. From Dedington the army marched Tuesday morning, by where the Lord Viscount Falkland hath a faire howse." Charles certainly "slept at the parsonage," but whether by this was meant the rectorial manor house or the vicarage, which lies on the south side of the churchyard, is not clear. It would probably be the former, the recently-erected Jacobean portion of which would offer fit accommodation. Hence, looking out of his bay window, Charles's eye would have met a scene of some desolation. Nine years before the tower of the church had fallen and had injured a portion of the fabric. The church, a fine edifice showing some Decorated work among its more evident Perpendicular features, appears in one of our views, and the plain, dumpy character of the upper part of the tower shows it to be a piece of later rebuilding, the collapse in 1635 having probably not gone lower than the stage where the buttresses now end. Letters patent were issued in 1636 authorising collections towards the repairing of the edifice, but this work was still delayed when the civil troubles began and when bell metal became useful for warlike purposes. So the year before his visit to the little town, the King had written from Oxford to the parson and churchwardens that, "Whereas information is given as that by the fall of your steeple . . . the bells are made unserviceable to you till the same be rebuilt and they are new founded; . . . we hereby require you to send the same to our magazine here in New College." Their weight and nature was to be carefully noted down, in order that they might ultimately be restored by the King "in materials or moneys." Like most of Charles's other good intentions, this was not destined to be fulfilled. One little bell the churchwardens of 1649 were able to provide. The other six bear a date a century and a-half later.

Itself saved from impending ruin, the "Castle House" now looks out over its own pleasant garden and lawn on to a restored church. The whole group of ancient buildings is trim and neat, but Mr. Franklin had not (as in the case of the older lower part of the house) to rebuild to any great extent the treble-storeyed bay portion with its fine square room on each floor, and its still higher back section, topped with the balustrade and containing the staircase. Its summit gives access to the roof, whence can be obtained a wide view over the little town and the rich undulating country sloping down east towards Cherwell's stream. The Jacobean builder did his work well, and it has endured. There is no rubble walling here, but a fine ashlar is the chief substance except for a certain amount of banding of the local ruddy yellow stone. The whole is in excellent condition, with a most alluring look of healthy and honoured old age spread over it. Here, as throughout the interior, Mr. Franklin deserves



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THE OAK STAIR.

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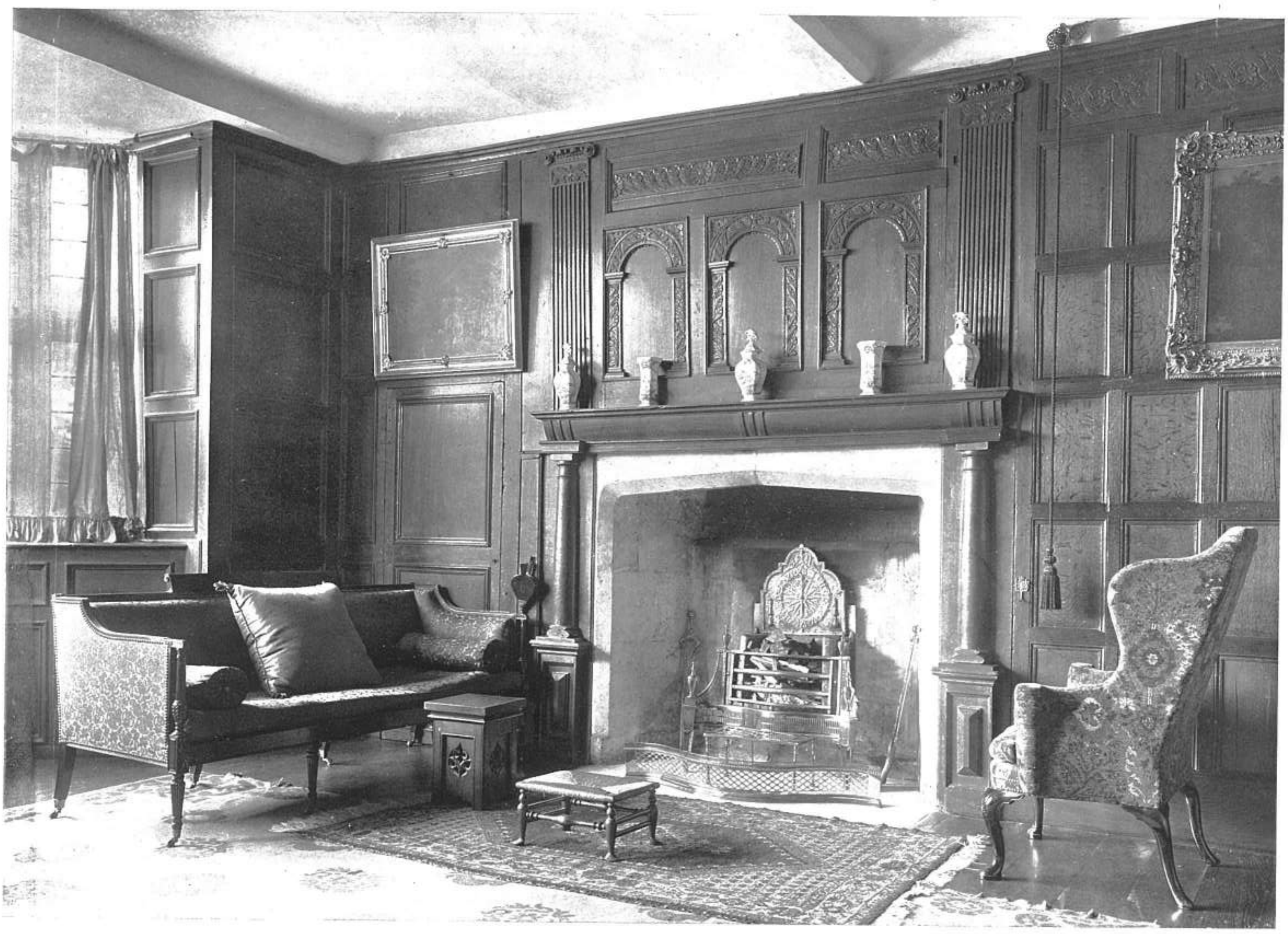

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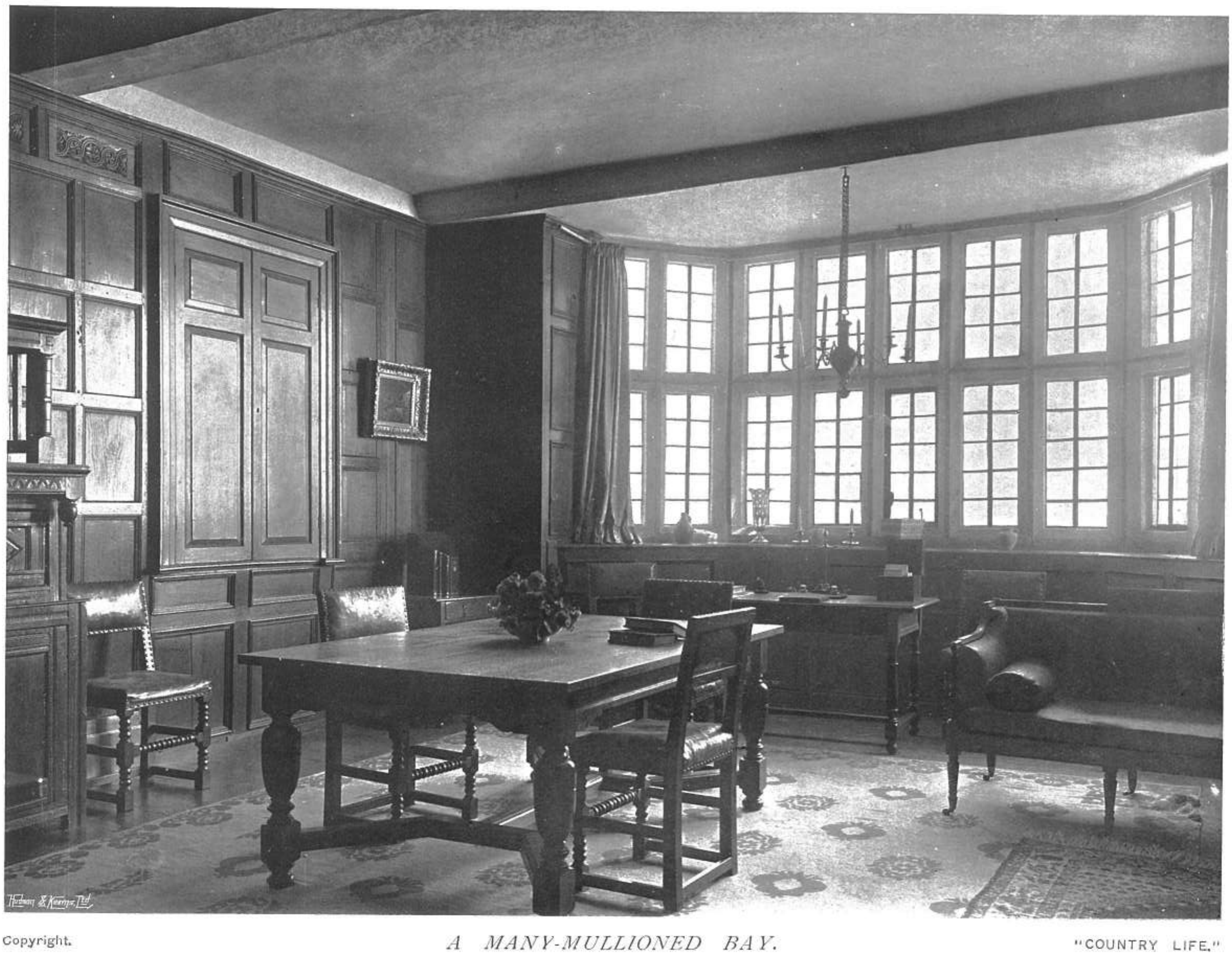
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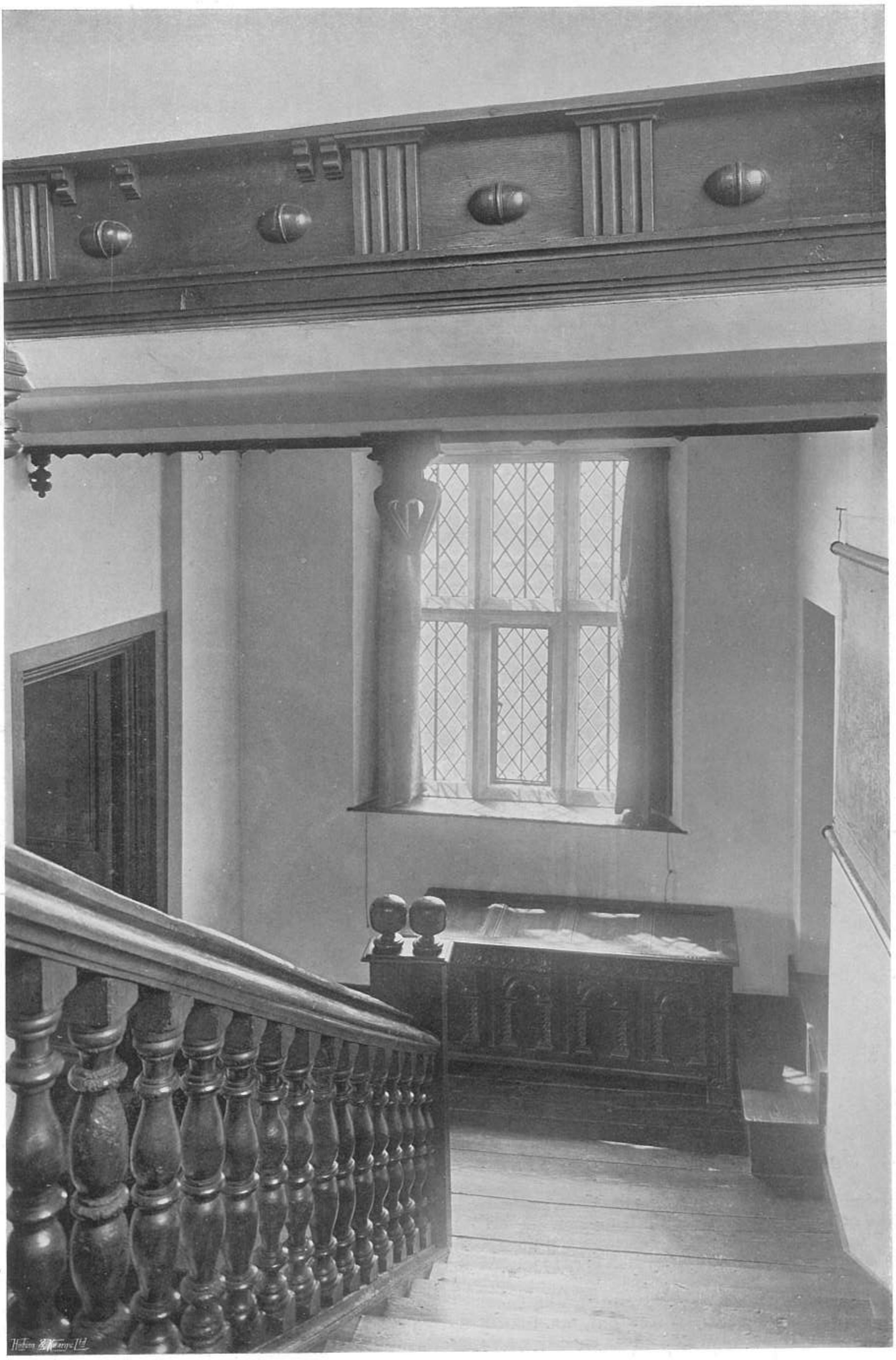
great praise for his conservative and tasteful treatment. Crossing the threshold we are in a square hall, reticent in its oak and whitewash treatment. To the right we enter the drawing-room, which is in the Queen Anne style. A fine-patterned stuff hangs on its walls, and an old landscape is framed in the great panel over the fireplace. If we venture to criticise the outside appearance of its circular bay window, we readily admit the pleasant look and enjoyable nature of its interior effect. Hall and drawing-room are pratically new, being in the old part of the house which Mr. Franklin found ruinous and without feature. But, passing across the hall, the environment is of a different character. Here Mr. Franklin found good original work in excellent condition, and the same good taste which has enabled him to strike the right note in his new work has led him to do full justice to and effect the best presentment of the old rooms. We offer our readers several pictures of the excellent though simple staircase, very ample, easy and dignified for the size of the house. The turning of the balusters and pendants, the mouldings of the hand-rails and strings are all first-rate, while the broad oblong shape of the newel-posts on the half-landings is unusual and interesting. There being little space between the returning stairways until the narrower top flights are reached, two newel-posts would have looked crushed and huddled together, whereas the one broad one, made out of a solid block from the heart of an oak tree and boldly fluted, has an excellent appearance. The pairs of turned balls, however, sitting together on the top of these newel-posts are, however, a little dull and inadequate as finials, and it is doubtful whether they were part of the scheme of the original designer. East of the staircase, on each of the three floors, lies one of the fine square, bay-windowed rooms. Of the lowest, known as the old parlour, we give two views, and these show how fully it retains its character. The east side is almost entirely occupied by the many-mullioned bay, which affords such abundant light that the north window was blocked up at some period when early Georgian panels and mouldings formed a cupboard front. The glow of light falling on to the waxed oak of panels and of furniture is well rendered in our view. To get this effect, facing full the great window from which the only light enters, is certainly one of Mr. Latham's photographic triumphs. The other view of this room given shows the well-proportioned details of the chimney-piece. Its long narrow shelf, resting on columns, is surmounted by a treble and carved arcade between fluted pilasters. The top oblong panels have flat carving, both above the chimney-piece and above the original Jacobean panelling, which covers the walls from floor to ceiling, except where the somewhat later cupboards interpose. The entirely appropriate and synchronous old furniture, so carefully and judiciously collected by Mr. Franklin, gives a sense of satisfying completeness to this room. Above it, and above again, lie its counterparts. The first floor bedroom is not panelled, but has a good original chimney-piece and adequate furniture. On the top floor we find a room rather higher than those below ; its walls are panelled to the height of about 8ft., above which is a plaster frieze. The old depressed-arch stone fireplace and the good single-pilastered oak mantel-piece give finish to this large, light and airy apartment, with its fine and dominant outlook. "The Great House," as it is termed in the Deddington Enclosure award of 1808, has been transformed from a shabby derelict into a delightful home under the sympathetic guidance of its present occupier. T.



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IN OLD CHELSEA.

LET us sit on Chelsea Bridge when night is falling. What a sight the great river is at dusk! How loud its weltering lap sounds against the massive piers as it passes into the heavy shadows! The red eye of the night ship watches from out the darkness, a silent barge slips down the stream, black and mysterious. The long line of lamps on the Embankment wavers in the flood. The opposite shore lies as still as in those far-off days when from Wandsworth to Woolwich all was wild marsh-land. Whatever else has changed the river flows past London as it always did. It bears the great barges and electric launches as calmly as it once floated the coracles of naked Britons. Just below this bridge was enacted the very earliest of all London's great events. Here Cæsar's legions, marching on Lyn dyn, fought the decisive battle for the city's conquest. For the exact spot we have the most unimpeachable of witnesses—the great river itself, for this was the only place where it could be forded. Maitland, the historian of London, sounded it at several neap tides and substantiated the position of the ford in September, 1732. When the foundations of the bridge were laid in 1856, the workmen came upon human bones and skulls, and British and Roman weapons came to light. The distance of the ford, too, from Ritespice in Kent, where the Romans landed, agrees exactly with Cæsar's measurements—eighty miles from the sea to where he crossed the river Thames. Here they met, then, in the water in desperate defence and fierce joy of conquest, and here many fell and have lain for nearly 2,000 years.

"Out of monuments, works, traditions, private records, fragments of stone and the like, we do save and recover something from the deluge of time," and amid all the thronging shadows with which memory peoples the river, we meet no more vivid personality than that of Sir Thomas More, whose house in Chelsea is the first of which we have any record. More built it in 1520 and it stood for two centuries. "This pore howse of Chelchyth" from which he dated his letters has vanished and Beaufort Street stretches all across the garden. The only remain of the old building is a solid brick wall, which divides the open space lying between Beaufort Street and Paulton Square. The bricks are of a kind peculiar to the period, of a very deep red, time-eaten, yet enduring. "Nothing I know of is so lasting as a well-made brick," says Carlyle. Along this wall More walked. In one corner lies a deep stone water-trough, very ancient, which perhaps stood in the stable-yard. A curious chance has left this space peaceful and open amid all the turmoil of the town. There rises before us the hospitable red-brick dwelling, as an old view of 1699 shows it, with generous mullions, oriel windows and deep porch. The garden rings with children's voices, the spare, dark man, so loved as father and friend, "being merry and jocund among them." Here Holbein was his guest for three happy years; here Erasmus sat at table and declared that More was born with that genius for friendship which enriches a man's life almost more than any other characteristic; here came and went Margaret Roper, most lovable as well as most learned of women; and here, too, came the King from his barge, and would saunter after dinner, his arm round More's neck in fatal friendship. Yet in this happy garden, too, stood the "Jesus-tree" at which heretics were flogged. The resolute old Catholic was determined to fight heresy, and his rigidity was the stand of a strong character against the drift of the times. But we forgive him much and could forgive more for the sake of that morning when he set out to obey the ominous summons to Lambeth, and suffered neither wife nor child to follow him to the water's edge, but "pulled the wicket after him with a heavy heart, as might be seen from his countenance," and sitting sadly in the boat, he presently said to Roper, "I thank the Lord, son, the field is won," and thinking it over afterwards, Roper perceived that the burning love of God had conquered all carnal affections in him, then and for ever.

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UPPERMOST TREADS OF STAIRCASE, CASTLE HOUSE, DEDDINGTON.

It is on part of this open space that it is proposed to erect Crosby Hall, which was More's town house. The rest of the ground has been strangely preserved by followers of that heresy which More was so zealous in suppressing. Through the ancient gateway that once led to his garden we pass from the din and hurry of the King's Road into the Moravian burial-ground, the