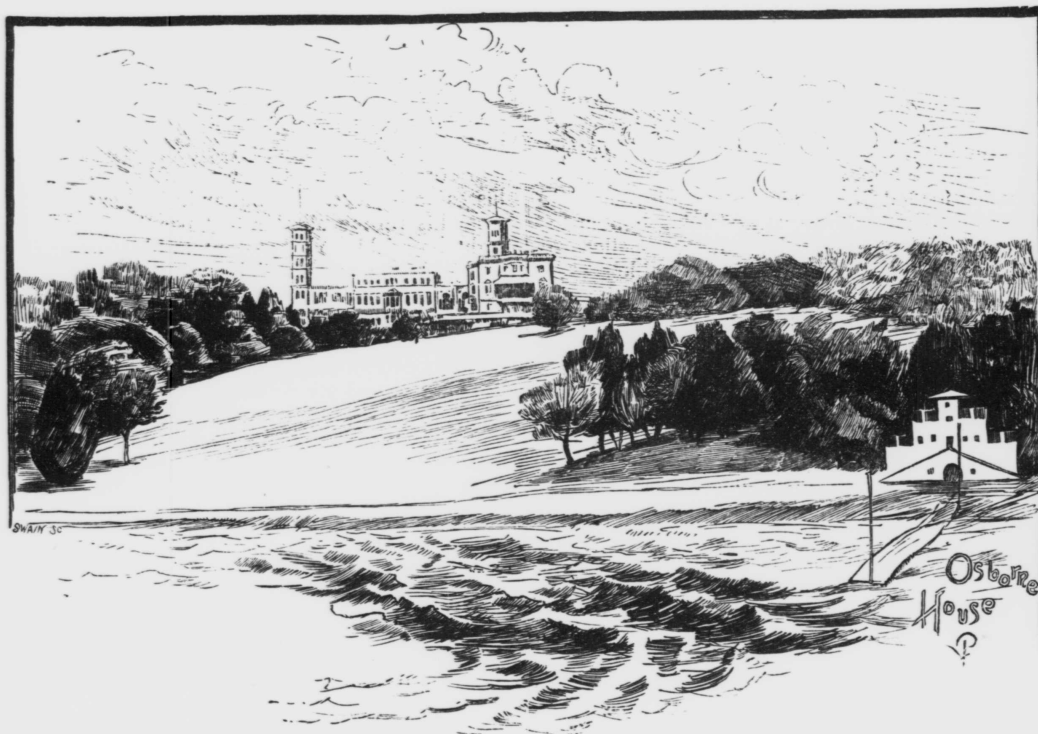


## THE QUEEN'S HOMES.

OSBORNE.



WHEN the Queen and Prince Consort were visiting the old Duke of Wellington, at Strathfieldsaye, a newspaper representative wrote to his Grace for the facilities usually accorded on such occasions. The Duke's answer was short and to the point: "F. M. the Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to Mr. —, and begs to say that he does not see what his house at Strathfieldsaye has to do with the public press." Nevertheless, "Mr. —'s" desire to see within it was pardonable. There was no great offence in public curiosity being exercised as to the country home and domestic life of an old warrior like the Duke of Wellington, most of whose time had been passed in camps and on the battle-field; though one may readily understand his blunt refusal to gratify it. The daily habits at Hawarden of such a man as Mr. Gladstone, for example, whose extraordinary activity and power of endurance at an age when most men are seeking repose, are the astonishment of every one, might possibly be commented upon without any very grave breach of decorum. Nor need we be ashamed of a little curiosity as to points of etiquette and matters of routine connected with the court and palace. These, at some time or other, become subjects of remark in public records and

works of reference and biography, and belong in a measure to the department of history.

In certain cases and in certain circumstances a writer does not commit any grave impropriety, in pointing out what he honestly thinks may be of public interest in the private life of public persons who have earned the country's gratitude, or in whom the world at large may be for the moment greatly interested. But when a writer seeks to overstep those limits, and asks permission, as we last year did, to visit the private Homes of the Queen (other than those under jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain), with a view to describing in print what he sees, he ought, in such case, to satisfy himself beforehand that the scope of his proposed paper is limited exactly to what may be properly set down, without infringing in one single point the bounds of ordinary courtesy. If he go beyond he is doing what he would resent in the person of another, who sought or ventured to intrude on his own domestic privacy.

The present writer received, through the editor of this publication, her Majesty's gracious permission to visit Osborne when she was absent; and he thinks it right at once to say that his paper will not touch upon any topic other than that belonging to a general description of the house

and grounds, with incidental reference to some pleasant associations of the place and the august lady to whom it belongs.

As a summer residence, Osborne House is an ideal home—an ideal home, that is to say, for a Queen and Empress. The best general view of it is to be had seaward from the Solent as the steamer makes her way from Ryde to Cowes, or crosses from Stokes Bay on the Portsmouth side. From Cowes itself nothing of the mansion is to be seen. It stands on the hill-top, the wooded slopes of which shut out the view from the wayfarer taking passage by the steam-launch which serves as a ferry between West and East Cowes. The estuary of the Medina, the little river which winds southward to Newport, and which has to be crossed in order to reach Osborne, presents one of the prettiest pieces of seascape to be imagined. On the east side stand the picturesque cottage-dwellings of the coastguard; and dwarf houses, stores, and inns fringe the waterside, to which the green trees on the hilly woodland above form a charming background; on the west, low-lying quays and houses reach round from the main street to a pretty promenade which is lapped in sunny days by the placid waters of the Solent. At high tide, the back-doors of the shops and the terrace steps are within a foot or two of the water, so that the daintiest lady may step from her house into her boat without soiling

of England. It is crowded with fairy craft of every class and build, from the lightest-built blue-and-gold-painted launch to the staunchest steam yacht, well-manned and well-equipped for an ocean voyage. Schooner-yachts, cutter-yachts, yawls, and every other craft in which English gentlemen love to cruise from port to port along the coast-line in the long days of summer, are to be seen at anchor in the Medina estuary when the Queen goes down to Osborne—as she usually does for a brief period—in August. Hardly a first-class yacht sails from this country but she makes for Cowes in the regatta week; and for liveliness and gaiety no such scene as the little town then presents is to be seen out of England.

The Queen's liking for this particular part of the island dates from her girlish days, when, as Princess Victoria, she lived for a time at Norris Castle with her mother, the Duchess of Kent. This is a picturesque, embattled edifice, in the old baronial style, which commands a view that even Osborne cannot rival. From it may be seen Portsmouth, with its fortifications, barracks, and shipping, the wooded coast-line of the island, from Old Castle Point to Nettlestone Headland, beyond Ryde; Southampton town and water, the New Forest in the background, and Calshot Castle, so-called, standing on the extreme point of a long bank of shingle marking the separation between the Solent



NORRIS CASTLE.

a shoe. Here and there, green fields and lawns slope to the water-edge, and the overhanging branches of trees which dip into the sea provide a welcome and delightful shelter to picnic parties from the too fierce rays of the summer sun.

In the early days of August this little bay is the rendezvous of the Royal Yacht Squadron

and Southampton river. No doubt reminiscences of her girlish days, and the pleasant freedom she then enjoyed in roaming through the woods and pretty secluded byways of the island, were not without influence in determining the Queen to buy Osborne when the opportunity came.

In 1840 the estate and a plain old red-brick

manor-house which then stood upon it, were bought from Lady Isabella Blackford. Osborne, however, as Lady Isabella sold it and as it now is, are very different places. Her Majesty enlarged the estate by later purchases until it now comprises some five thousand acres, stretching in one direction from the high road between East Cowes and Newport to the thickly-wooded shores of King's Quay; and in the other from the Solent shore to the Ryde road. In brief, the estate is about two and a half miles long by two wide, and, in point of diversified beauty, embraces hill and

onward, to the left, Albert and Osborne Cottages are seen peeping through the trees; and yet a few yards farther on, standing a little way back from the main road, is an archway of stone with tall iron gates which serves as the principal entrance to Osborne. A carriage drive sweeps round from here to the eastern terrace and the house.

Not being privileged to enter this way, which is reserved to royalty alone, we find our right road a short distance on, where the courteous guardian of the lodge (whom we recognise as once of Buckingham Palace) bids us present our credentials to the



OSBORNE HOUSE FROM THE GROUNDS.

dale, meadow and woodland, seashore and rustic church. The only place known to us which can compare with it in this respect being lovely Mount Edgcombe, that skirts the western shores of Plymouth Sound. When the purchase of Osborne was completed, the Prince Consort, with his usual energy, set about putting the estate in order. The present mansion was planned (it is said largely by himself) and built, first the Pavilion and the eastern front, and at a late date the north and south wings.

Turning aside from the little Medina Inn by the quay, you make your way to Osborne House by a broad hilly road, passing at foot of it what appears to be the rather shabby beginnings of a new town. At this point stands a solitary tree, where the guard of honour is drawn up to receive and salute the Queen at her home-coming and on her departure. About half way up this hill, on either side of which, here and there, are small dwellings of the townspeople, Kent House is reached, which marks, we believe, the limit in this direction of the Queen's estate. A few yards

policeman who stands at the cross roads within the grounds, to warn off intruders who may get that far unchallenged. A tall, pleasant-faced, grey-bearded constable of the A Division of Metropolitan Police, whose service in guarding royalty extends over many years, examines our authority, and, finding it in proper form, escorts us to the house and takes his leave. Another guide now takes us in charge, and in his company we pass through the principal apartments.

"It sounds so pleasant," wrote the Queen to King Leopold of Belgium, when she first went to Osborne, "to have a place of one's own, quiet, retired, and free from all 'Woods and Forests' and other departments, which are the plague of one's life." Osborne is the Queen's very own. The Lord Chamberlain and other high officials of the palace have no jurisdiction here. It is as much her private property as the house that the artisan builds for himself is his. The result has been that Osborne, more perhaps than any other residence of her Majesty, exhibits the best indication of her own taste in respect of art and decora-

tion. The corridors are filled with beautiful statuary and cabinets of art treasures in precious metals and china, and the rooms with pictures chiefly modern.

The most striking characteristic of the mansion is its elegance and cheerfulness. It is precisely what a summer residence should be. There are no small over-furnished rooms with dull wall papers and heavy curtains; but everything is arranged with a view to enliven and to captivate the eye. In keeping with this judicious arrangement, the prevailing decorations of the rooms are in the lighter tints of white, azure, green, vermilion, and gold. The principal apartments open upon corridors, the lofty windows of which overlook the terraces and lawn.

It would be impossible to name or describe in detail the numerous fine pieces of sculpture which delighted us as we passed from room to room. These stand in the hall and main and lesser corridor, and comprise examples of the best known modern masters—Gibson, Theed, Weeks, Thorneycroft, Boehm, and Calder Marshall. Doubtless most of them were exhibited at the Royal Academy in times past, including the busts of the Queen's children, of which there are several; the most noticeable examples being grouped next the Queen's entrance, bearing, if our memory serves us, the name of Thorneycroft. The Psyche by Von Hoyer, the same subject by Theed, the Paul and Virginia by Jean Geefs, the Queen by Marchetti, the Prince Consort by Theed, the Prince of Wales by Gibson, the Duchess of Kent by Theed, a most beautiful Venus and Cupid (by an artist whose name we do not remember); and a grand group standing in the beautiful hall, a reminiscence of the first Exhibition of 1851, greatly occupy our attention. We could have wished to linger and study and enjoy these and other charming works of art, but that time pressed and we had to pass to other parts of the mansion.

In the cabinets we noticed things commemorative of bygone ceremonies, in the shape of gold and silver trowels with due inscriptions from bodies corporate, and such matters of bric-à-brac as carved ivory chessmen, jewel-boxes, inkstands, coins, and the like. On the grand staircase is a fine fresco of Neptune surrendering to Britannia the empire of the ocean; and below, in the hall next the group of statuary from the first Great Exhibition referred to above, stands a brass field-piece, a trophy of Tel-el-Kebir, presented to her Majesty by Admiral Lord Alcester. It was in that action the Duke of Connaught received his "baptism of fire."

In the south wing on the ground floor are the apartments reserved to the ladies and gentlemen in attendance on her Majesty at Osborne—the Household dining and drawing rooms, billiard room, etc.—spacious and handsomely furnished. Outside, in the corridor, we noticed two pictures, illustrating subjects connected with the seaward view from here; the ill-fated wreck of the *Eurydice*, and a Naval Review at Spithead, both by H. Robins. On the canvas of the last-named the artist notes that it was sketched and painted in twenty-eight hours. All the royal apartments,

with the exception of the bedrooms, are on this floor, in what is known as the Pavilion part of the house: the Queen's drawing-room, dining-room, sitting-room, council-room, audience-chamber, etc., including a very handsome billiard-room. In this stands a billiard-table, to judge by the cursory glance we had of it, of stained or polished woods, in imitation of variegated marble. It is the most beautiful thing of the kind we ever saw; and, indeed, the pretty appointments and decorations of this room could hardly be matched.

In the Queen's dining-room are a number of portraits of the royal family, beginning at the upper end with that of the Duchess of Kent, hanging next a large canvas by Winterhalter, representing the Queen and Prince Consort in their earlier days, with the royal children; and ending at the lower with a recently-painted portrait of the Princess Beatrice and Prince Henry of Battenberg. In the intervening spaces are full-lengths of the late Emperor Frederick of Prussia and his wife, the Prince of Hesse and Princess Alice of England, Prince and Princess Christian, and the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the members of their family. The portraits of the princes are taken in uniform.

In the council-room hangs the magnificent work of Landseer, "The Deer Drive;" and in other apartments are many examples of well-known English artists, besides some very valuable specimens of the old masters.

We have already incidentally referred to the charming decoration of the rooms. The carpets, curtains, and furniture generally are, we need hardly add, in harmony with the taste everywhere so noticeable in the interior arrangements of Osborne. In one apartment (we forget now which) hangs an exquisitely designed chandelier, of Venetian manufacture, of various coloured glass, shaped in festoons of bell-shaped flowers of the brighter hues—pink, white, violet, and amber. In point of fact, the elegance and prettiness of ornamentation at once captivate the visitor who may be privileged to see the inside of the Queen's home at Osborne.

The sleeping apartments and private sitting-rooms of the Queen, and those of the princesses who may be staying with her, are on the first floor. We have seen some interesting photographs of these (by Hughes and Mullins, of Ryde) to which we shall have to refer the reader who may desire a nearer inspection of them.

A private chapel has been recently built at Osborne, or rather one of the lower rooms has been adapted to the purposes of a private chapel, to obviate the necessity of the Queen going to Whippingham. It is a plain, long room (as yet not finished), with ceiling and wall decorations in light tints. At the upper end is an ordinary reading-desk, which serves as pulpit, next which is a small space for a communion-table, and on the other side a desk for the officiating clergy. At the lower end is an organ, with silvered-metal pipes, but otherwise destitute of ornament. Rows of chairs in tasteful walnut are placed on the unoccupied floor space in the middle of the chapel, the Queen's slightly in advance of the others, with a little table in front, on which is carved a

radiant sun, with the legend, "Heaven's light our guide"—if we mistake not, the motto of the Order of the Star of India.

The Queen used regularly to attend divine service at Whippingham Church, where, later, her youngest daughter and constant companion

nave, chancel, transepts, north and south aisles, and central tower and spire. The Prince Consort who regularly went to Whippingham on Sundays to service, did not live to see it opened, though it was all but completed before his death, and the widowed Queen has placed a splendid and costly



THE CORRIDOR.

of her widowhood, Princess Beatrice, was married—the first instance on record, it is said, of a daughter of the Sovereign being married in a parish church. The present edifice stands on the site of a more ancient church, dedicated to St. Mildred, which, after undergoing much restoration and patching-up, was finally pulled down in the Prince Consort's time. He, we believe, had much to do with planning and superintending the erection of the present building. The modern St. Mildred's (which is but a short distance from Osborne House) is a very handsome church, with

monument to his memory in it. The font, presented by her Majesty, is also a memorial of the Prince Consort, after designs by the Princesses Christian and Louise. A more recent monument is to the memory of the Duke of Albany. The rectory, where Canon Prothero resides, is pleasantly shaded by trees, and commands a beautiful landscape.

Considering the extent of the park at Osborne, and the variety of scenery it comprises, it is little wonder that when her Majesty is staying there she seldom cares to go beyond the grounds. Occa-

sionally she drives out on the pretty Newport road, and once in a while goes as far as Ryde, but such excursions are now few and far between. The one inconvenience inseparable from living in the Isle of Wight is that it is unpleasantly warm, and rather enervating in summer. Nature has done her best, however, to remedy this in respect of the Queen's home. A magnificent lawn slopes down to the sea, and the house stands on very high ground, approached by a succession of terraces. On either side rise rocky knolls crested with foliage, and the paths that have been laid out bring the few who are now privileged to wander there to lovely little shady nooks and coigns of vantage, where picturesque peeps of sea and sky and inland scenery may be had. The grounds of Osborne have been well described as a blending of all beauties—streams and dells, fruit, foliage, crag, wood, and cornfield. Where Nature has failed to do all, Art has tendered her aid. An open corridor runs all along the north-west side of the building, and there is a semicircular balcony on the first floor in the tower-wing, of

times breakfasts and does her usual morning work of writing in the sultry days of August. She has also a pretty retreat by the waterside, near the princes' bathing-place, and she used to avail herself, when tired in strolling through the grounds, of a room at Barton Farm, the residence of her steward. The bathing-place is at the foot of the lawn, marked by a small castellated structure on one side, and a boat-house on the other.

In summer there used to be—we do not know whether this is so now—a floating bath, moored about two hundred yards from the beach, the centre of which formed a well of fair dimensions, having a movable grating, or platform, at bottom, which could be raised and lowered at pleasure. A small boat, manned by two of the sailors from the royal yacht, was always in attendance to row any of the family who wished for a dip out to this bath, and in due time back to the shore. It is on the plan of the floating baths once tried on the Thames, the filthy water of which—though, we believe, to a large degree purified before flowing through—is not so tempting as the sea off Osborne.



THE DRAWING-ROOM.

which her Majesty often avails herself in summer. The gardens, which are not very spacious, though they contain many rare and splendid shrubs and flowering plants, lie to the left of the terrace.

A small tent is put up on the lawn or in a shady part of these gardens, in which the Queen some-

None of the residences within the grounds—Osborne Cottage, Albert Cottage, Kent House, and Barton Farm—are larger than the better class of suburban villas about London. In the first the Empress Eugenie has stayed during her visit to the Queen. It is a tasteful structure, with

timbered front and roof, shut in from the high road by trees—a pretty rural dwelling, with flowering plants climbing the sides, such as one may see skirting Wimbledon Park and Common. When Osborne House is full, as is not unusual, the princes, equerries, and the gentlemen in attendance on the Queen's guests are lodged in these cottages. The Prince and Princess of

tion will be needed. The Queen's grandchildren and great-grandchildren are growing too big for the little "cribs" our eye takes note of in a photograph of one of the apartments. The Swiss Cottage, where our own princes and princesses played—the princes and princesses whose children are now grown to be young men and women—still stands in the grounds, an interesting memorial of the



WHIPPINGHAM CHURCH.

Wales, and Princess Beatrice and Prince Henry of Battenberg, have sojourned at Kent House. The mansion at Osborne is not sufficiently large nowadays to shelter all the members of the Queen's family who may happen to be visiting there when she is in residence, whatever may have been the case in former times.

Osborne from the first has been the children's home, and, to judge by the nursery accommodation still provided, it retains somewhat of its pleasant character in this respect; though the days, alas, are lessening when this accommoda-

tion will be needed. The Queen's grandchildren and great-grandchildren are growing too big for the little "cribs" our eye takes note of in a photograph of one of the apartments. The Swiss Cottage, where our own princes and princesses played—the princes and princesses whose children are now grown to be young men and women—still stands in the grounds, an interesting memorial of the

CHARLES EYRE PASCOE.