

The Viscountess Barrington at Beckett



The Inner Hall

which make a purple line against the background of the sky. But once inside the gates of the park everything is changed. The well-ordered home farm, showing signs of the care bestowed on it by a good and generous landlord, the emerald-green lawns of the grounds, the splendid trees which surround the house, and which include some of the finest beeches in England, make Beckett the ideal home for an English country gentleman.

The house itself is one of the curious sports of the mid-eighteenth century. The architect who designed it for one of the earlier Lord Barringtons was one Thomas Liddell, entirely an amateur in the art. He was, however, most fortunately immune from the trammels of the hideous style of architecture which defaced England in the days of the later Georges. Instead, consequently, of the pretentious ugliness which characterises such buildings as, for example, the Pavilion at Brighton, Mr. Liddell sought his inspiration from the Tudor architect and erected an edifice that, externally at least, approaches nearly the delightful domestic architecture of Henry VIII.'s reign, and which might well be three hundred instead of one hundred years old.

The distant view of the house is most picturesque. Over two walls climbs a magnificent Virginia creeper, which in its present glorious autumn tints harmonises perfectly with the mellow greystone background. The green lawns and paths edged by many-coloured herbaceous borders sweep down gently to a broad lake, on which floats majestically a

IN the heart of the rather monotonous county of Berkshire, quite close to the old-time village of Shrivvenham, Beckett, the beautiful country home of Viscount and Viscountess Barrington, stands like an oasis in the midst of a desert. The surrounding country is flat and uninteresting, broken only by the lofty range of the White Horse hills,

flock of snow-white swans. On the edge of the lake stands a fascinating Chinese tea-house, from which the ladies of other days used to watch the old coach road which ran close by on the other side of the lake. From the foot of the tea-house the lake is spanned by a white wooden bridge, which bears the fascinating name of the Cradle, and which leads nowadays into the heart of the splendid trees which shelter that side of the house.

Beautiful as Mr. Liddell made the outside of the house, he was perhaps hardly so successful from the purely domestic point of view, for although the interior of Beckett is nearly as attractive as the outside, there are one or two quaint flaws which a professional architect would perhaps have avoided. The staircase, for example, which should undoubtedly be a prominent feature in a mansion of that size, is tucked away in an unconsidered corner, while, again, the magnificent suite of reception-rooms lead one into the other, but only the rooms at the end have egress into the central hall.

Leading from the porch is a small outer hall, which is decorated with trophies of the chase, among them an otter that was killed at Beckett fifty years ago. Round the walls are ranged Dutch and Queen Anne chairs and a splendid old Dutch cabinet, while on the walls are two oil paintings which commemorate the services rendered to his country by Captain the Hon. S. Barrington, R.N., for they record two naval duels, in both of which the gallant sailor commanded the winning vessel. One, in 1747, between the *Bellona* and the *Duc de Chartres*, and the other, twelve years later, between the *Achilles* and the *St. Florentine*, when the English ship, although decidedly inferior in strength, gained a splendid victory through the pluck of her crew and the superior seamanship of her commander.

This small hall gives on to the large central hall, the heavily-moulded ceiling of which is surmounted by a glass roof, while the corridor round the upper storey looks down on it over a series of wooden galleries. The hall is attractively furnished with Elizabethan and Stuart chairs and tables, while some large contemporary scenes decorate the walls.

Of all the rooms the most interesting is perhaps the library, a lofty room with a square, panelled ceiling, in which the ribs stand out in

deep relief and are ornamented with splendidly carved rosettes. It is surrounded by an oaken bookcase filled with priceless tomes of great literary and historic interest. State papers dated from 1501, a family Bible printed in 1583, and an early copy of Hobbes's "Leviathan," in the fly-leaf of which is inscribed the amusing legend, "This Book belongeth to William Wildman, Lord Viscount Barrington. But the principles thereof do not with his agree," are but a few of the many splendid volumes which the library contains.

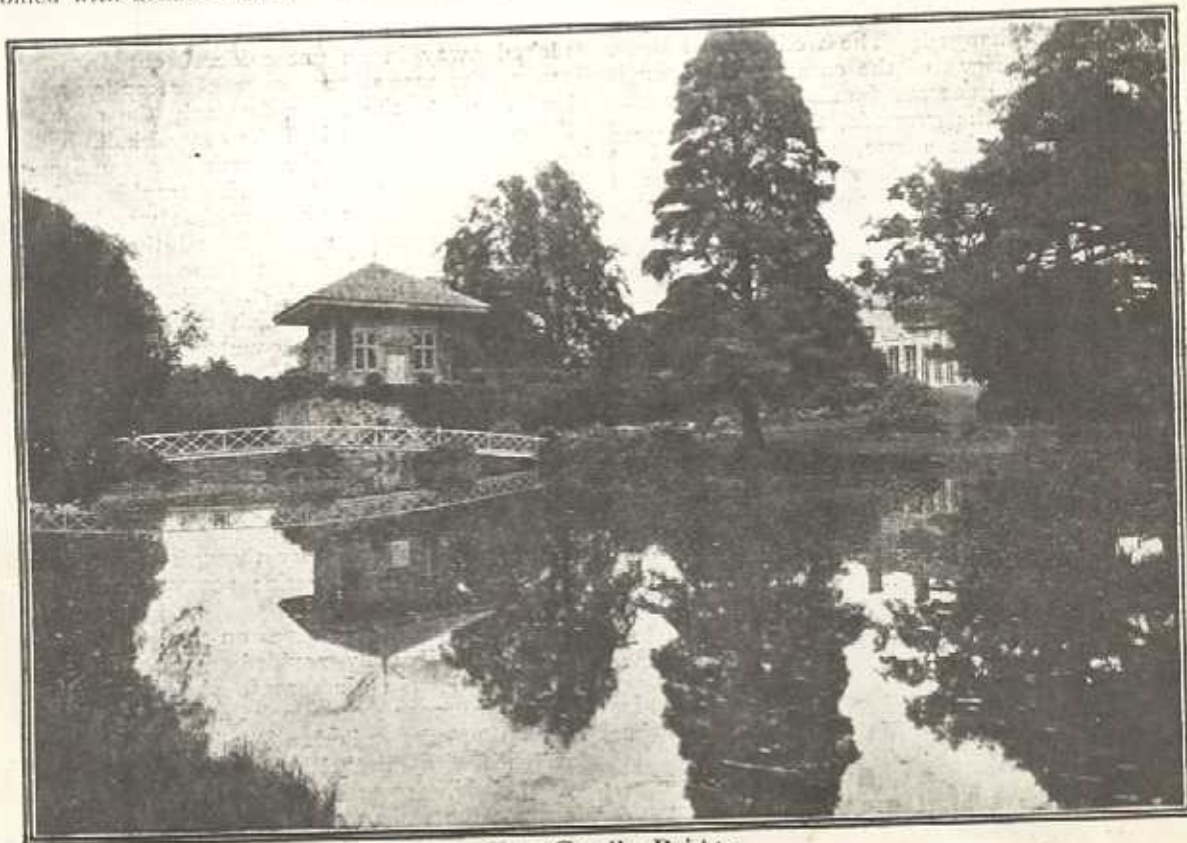
Leading out of the library is a long saloon furnished in the Louis XV. style, except for a few chairs of the most ornate form of Queen Anne period. On the walls are some very good family portraits, which include more especially a virile picture by Holbein and Romney's masterpiece of the beautiful Mrs. Barrington. Over the carved mantelpiece hangs a splendid Louis XV. looking-glass, while some beautiful specimens of Dresden china adorn the writing-desk. A feature of this room, as, indeed, of all the rooms at Beckett, is the magnificent ceiling, on which an infinity of care and labour must have been expended.

The next room of the suite is the drawing-room, which is upholstered in a soothing shade of old gold. Here, too, some delightful pictures decorate the walls, while over the carved mantelpiece hangs a magnificent mirror, under which stands a delicate Dresden china clock. Against the walls on either side are two large Buhl cabinets filled with beautiful china, while the whole atmosphere of the room is of comfort combined with artistic taste.

Leading from the drawing-room is the small breakfast-room, one door of which opens into the inner hall, while opposite is a large glass conservatory filled with sweet-smelling flowers, and in which stands a tangerine orange tree laden with golden fruit. The green walls of the room are relieved by some black and white prints, while on either side of the door hangs a splendid gilt Chippendale mirror. The fourth door of the room gives a view of the dining-room, which is upholstered in unrelieved cardinal red and furnished with heavy oak in perfect conformity with the hue of the room.

This stately mansion is essentially *the* big house of the countryside, and to its occupiers the villagers look for the moral and material support in their needs. As long as Lady Barrington reigns as the châtelaine of Beckett they know they will not look in vain, for a large part of her life at her country home is devoted to the care and comfort of the aged and sick and to the advancement of the children of her poorer neighbours.

In every phase of local life Lady Barrington takes a leading part in the neighbourhood. A staunch Unionist, imbued with the traditions of generations of men, both of her own and of her husband's family, who in politics, science, and war have rendered ungrudging service to their country, and alive, from first-hand knowledge, to the danger of pauperising the rural population, whether by legislative or personal doles, she tries to instil into the coming generation a sense of Imperial responsibility and dignity. One of her most cherished schemes, which unfortunately the red-tapeism of a bureaucracy is doing



The Cradle Bridge
and Chinese Tea House, from which the ladies of fashion a hundred years ago used to watch the passing show of the old coach road



(*At Home*) Photo by Dover Street Studios

THE VISCOUNTESS BARRINGTON

with Viscount Barrington, her daughter, the Hon. Mrs. James Stopford, and her two grand-children, Miss Patricia and Master James Stopford, who is heir in tail male to the Earldom of Courtown

its best to stultify, is the work initiated by Mr. Close of farm homes in Canada, where the children who in England might ultimately drift into the great army of unemployed, can lead a healthy life and earn an honourable living, while at the same time they rivet another link between the Mother Country and the Dominion.

A convinced opponent of Woman Suffrage, Lady Barrington seeks to inculcate among the girls of the village the first principles of domestic economy. Cooking, sewing, and housewifely traits are part of the education she considers necessary for every young woman, while her earnest endeavours are directed to prevent immature girls leaving home at an early age for the drudgery and existence of a general servant.

General Baden-Powell found no more whole-hearted supporter than Lady Barrington, for from the three villages within her direct sphere of influence she organised and equipped three patrols of Boy Scouts. She still looks



The Gallery

the first of the fine suite of Reception Rooms

after their finances, for even a penny a week is a severe tax on the resources of most of the village youngsters, but she finds her reward in seeing the improvement in their physique under a very efficient scout-master, who served in the South African war, and already she notices a marked advance in their intelligence and character, for the boys of "Lady Barrington's Own" are intent to do credit to their name.

Lady Barrington is also keenly interested in the Children's Social Sunday Union, the Sunday schools which Lady Jane Taylor instituted as a counterblast to the blasphemy and Red Catechism with which the Socialist and

Agnostic teachers poison the receptive minds of young children. That they are already bearing fruit is proved by the fact that many of the Socialistic parents bring their children to these classes, where there is no political propaganda, but where they are taught that love of fellow men and love of God are inseparable, where the law of Christianity is preached in place of the anarchy of free thought.



The Library

which houses a notable collection of great literary and historic interest