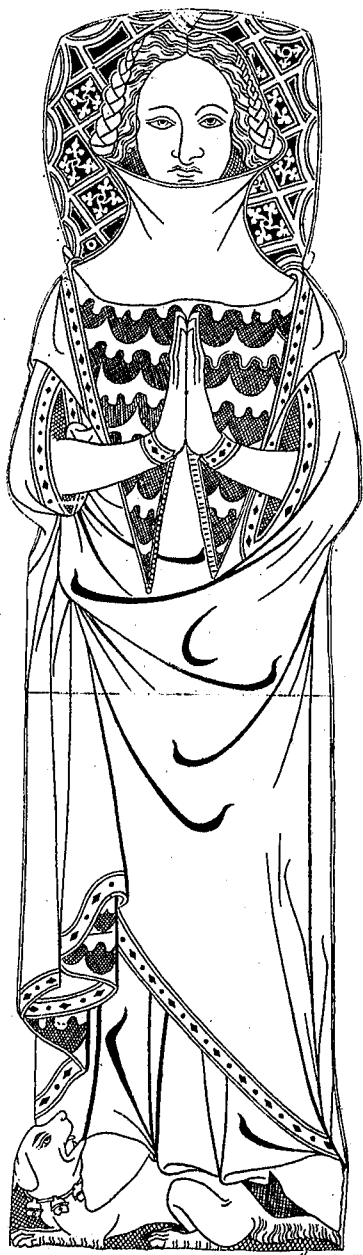
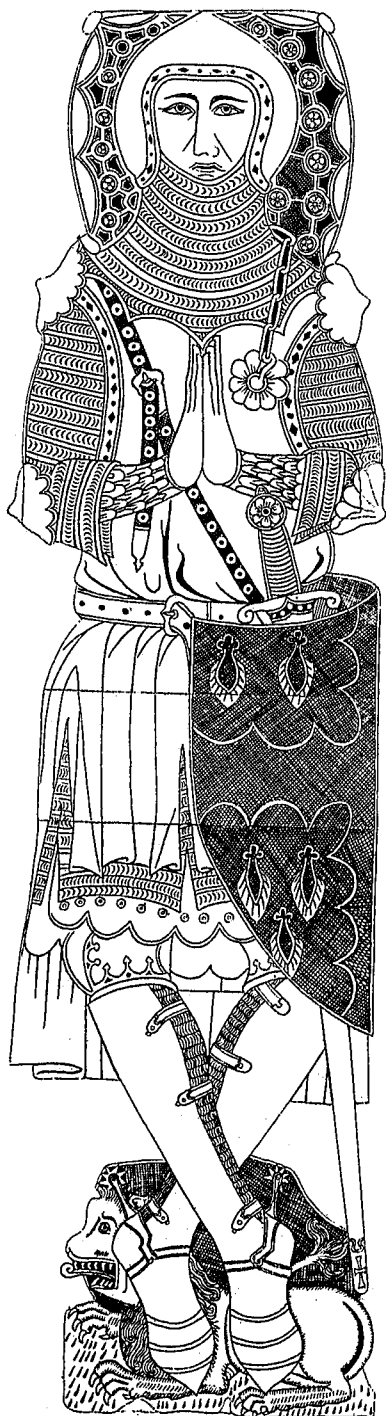


ON THE BRASS OF SIR JOHN DE NORTHWODE
AND LADY, IN MINSTER CHURCH, SHEPPEY.

BY J. G. WALLER.

It has always been a moot question, as to whence we derived the monumental brass; whether from France or Flanders. It is not likely to be ever settled, for in the early part of the thirteenth century, when we get the first record of a brass, and that in England, there was no distinctive character so strongly marked in art, as to give a nationality to the work. But in after times, when a further development took place, it was very different. English brasses, for the most part, were cut out clear to the outline of the figures; whilst the Flemish, and probably a large number of French brasses, were executed in such a manner as to present a large oblong surface of metal, composed of several plates; and the figures were represented under rich canopies, and surrounded by elaborate diaper work. But there are Flemish brasses which follow the system that I call English; and some small English examples, of a late date, may be found to follow the Flemish type. The true distinction, indeed, lies really in the mechanical execution. The English workman made more use of the lozenge-shaped or true graver, whilst the Flemish preferred, at least, in all broad lines, to use a chisel-shaped tool.



SIR JOHN DE NORTHWODE AND LADY.
MINSTER, SHEPPY.

Of Flemish examples, we have in England several of a very fine character; but we must enter into some speculation, before we can positively assign any of the brasses, now remaining in this country, to a French hand. Nevertheless, the brass which forms the subject of these remarks, may more reasonably be concluded to be French, than any other we possess. The grounds upon which this assertion is made are several; the first is, that it differs very much from any other, not only in style, but in a variety of details of costume and treatment. Before, however, these points are discussed, it is necessary to describe the monument.

It is preserved in Minster Church, in the Isle of Sheppey, and, in its present condition, consists of the figures of a knight and lady side by side. In my opinion, these were originally in two distinct tombs, doubtless commemorating husband and wife, and probably representing Sir John de Northwode, and his wife Joan de Badlesmere. For if the figure of the knight is critically examined as it now lies upon the floor, it will become obvious at once, that there is a piece lost from the centre, cutting across the shield, so that the arms upon it are in a confused and disjointed condition. In the engraving, accompanying this memoir, the original state of this part of the brass is attempted to be given, by carefully following up and restoring the lines of the two several portions, and bringing the heraldic bearings once more into an intelligible form.* This done, it will be seen that the figure of the knight is considerably larger than that of the lady, shewing much too great a difference to allow of their belonging

* The fainter lines in the engraving indicate restorations of mutilations.

to the same tomb, or being arranged side by side on one slab.

There is yet another, still more remarkable, feature in this figure. The whole of the lower part, from the knees downward, does not correspond in character with the upper. The armour, and the style of the lion,* are of a much later time, and the general execution, coupled with the rest, will not allow us to think this portion to be at all earlier than the sixteenth century. The metal also is of a different colour. When my brother and I first examined this curious monument, in April, 1838, we at once came to the conclusion that it was a restoration, and no part of the original design. The crossed legs, so fantastically rendered, when compared side by side with other examples, which require the knees to be more approximated, confirmed us in our views, for this was evidently not the original position in which the legs had been arranged. In Stothard's work on 'Monuments' this figure is engraved, and he has kept a separating space between this portion and the rest, evidently shewing that he had perceived the distinction existing, betwixt the older and the more recent work. As, however, he did not live to complete the text himself, this does not appear to be therein noted. The boundary of this restoration is easily seen, for the added piece does not well unite its lines with the rest. It runs along the lower part of the shield, passing at the base of the *genouillères* or knee-pieces, from the right of which it then falls down perpendicularly, and parallel to some pendant folds of the surcoat.

The period of this restoration may be approxi-

* This resembles that on the brass of Piers Gerard, 1492, in Winwick Church, Lancashire.—*Vide* Waller's *Monumental Brasses*.

mately settled by the general character of the work, and particularly by that of the recumbent lion. But, curiously enough, many of the details are inaccurately rendered, and do not agree with any period precisely, as if the artist were aware of the fact that he had to assimilate his work to an earlier time, with which, however, he was very imperfectly acquainted. But Canon Scott Robertson, your Secretary, has discovered some documents, at Lambeth, which entirely set at rest and determine, not only the time, but the circumstances under which this restoration was effected.

From the Register of Archbishop Warham, in Lambeth Palace Library, it appears that, at a visitation held at Sittingbourne Oct. 1, 1511, the churchwardens of Minster, in Sheppey, "presented" that, "It is desyred that where, of long tyme agoo, in the said chapell, a knight and his wife [were] buried, and their pictures upon theym very sore worne and broken, that they may take away the pictures, and lay in the place a playn stone, with an epitaphy who is there buried, that the people may make setts and pewys, where they may more quietly serve God, and that it may less cowmber the rowme." (Register, folio 57, b.)

"The Commissary admonished the Churchwardens and parishioners to present themselves before the Lord Archbishop, and to implore his paternity for help in this matter."* This clearly means that the parish authorities were to seek help in *repairing* the figures, and *not* to remove them; and we may now reasonably infer that this course was pursued, and that an attempted restoration of the figure of the knight took

* "Commissarius monuit . . . ad presentandum, se coram d'no archie'po et ad implorandum eius paternitatem pro remedio huius materie." (Fol. 79, b.)

place, and resulted in the anomalous condition in which we now see it. It is evident, that besides the loss of the legs, a large piece of plate was missing in the centre of the figure, cutting through the shield in such a manner as to entirely destroy the heraldic achievement, and rendering it impossible to say what it originally was, except by a process of research and inference. The arms of the Northwood family are *ermine*, a cross engrailed *gules*. The large size of the ermine spots will excuse the error, made by Mr. Stothard's editor, of confounding it with a chestnut leaf; it is unusual, indeed, but the form is undoubted, and the principle of ancient heraldry was distinctness. Admitting the field to be ermine, the rest is easy, as the portion of the cross engrailed gives sufficient data for working out a required result.*

The above facts are particularly interesting, for they bring to light one method by which our monumental brasses may have been made to disappear. Many churchwardens, before the Reformation, may have desired, like those of Minster, to cast out decayed brasses, and substitute for them a new "epitaphy." Not at every time, we may be certain, was an injunction given to repair or to restore; but I am by no means certain that we have here the only instance of a restoration of some kind. Not so much perhaps, of a mutilated figure, as of an entire memorial, for there are several brasses, in different parts of the country, which have so suspicious an appearance, that it is most sure they do not represent the work of a contemporary

* At present the figure is shortened by bringing the two separated parts together. This was without doubt done at the restoration of the legs, but the engraving shews the original position of these parts, and so restores the arms.

hand. In this paper it is impossible to enter into the subject, for this Minster "presentment," and the Minster brass open up a new phase in the history of monumental brasses, which, to be thoroughly worked out, would require much time and space. I may however here hint my suspicions that some of the brasses at Pluckley, in this county, belong to this category.

I have expressed my belief that the figures were originally separate monuments, possibly side by side, and each having, according to the prevalent custom, the inscription on the margin of the slab, either in letters of brass inlaid, or engraved on a fillet. The figure of the knight is one of the most interesting examples, we possess, of the military equipment of the first quarter of the fourteenth century: a period of transition, from the armour of chain mail, to that of plate. First, let us take the mail itself. This is of that description to which Sir Samuel R. Meyrick gave the name of "banded." It is appropriate, inasmuch as it correctly conveys an idea of its character, *i.e.*, transverse bands, alternating with the rings. Probably, no part of the armour of the fourteenth century has so much exercised the wits of our critical students, whether at home or abroad. All sorts of theories have been propounded. Meyrick himself has more than one; and what the construction was, has to this hour never been settled. Perhaps the greatest difficulties have arisen from the want of consideration of the conventional treatment of the artists. In no single instance yet found, either in sculpture or paintings, or in the incised work of brasses, has anything whatever been given which would warrant any one in asserting that it represented the actual appearance of a means of construction. Yet, really, every argument and every

suggestion has been based upon this appearance. Were they bands of leather, or other material fixed outside? If so, how attached? They must be flexible, or they could not be applied; and it is certain they were intended for an additional means of defence, to the flexible interlacing chain-mail, seeing that this first appears when additions of various kinds were being devised. Some suggestions have been made, as to whether they were rings at all, or not plates of steel held by leathern bands? Reason and common sense demand that this mail should be an improvement upon, and not a deterioration from, the old chain-mail so ingeniously contrived, which had been in use for so many ages. In short, to conceive a coat of mail made up of single rings, held in some way by thongs, or of plates of steel held in a similar manner, as has been suggested, is to declare that the knight gave up an excellent mode of manufacture, for an inferior one, at the very time when the armourer was devising all sorts of additional expedients for his protection, as we see in our example. This reasoning of course fails, and it is unnecessary to pursue, or to confute, that which is condemned in self evidence.

The history of interlaced chain-mail, which Sir Samuel Meyrick thought no older than the thirteenth century at most, we can carry back by actual example to the age of Sennacherib, 700 B.C. For the annexed wood-cut (Fig. 1), from an Assyrian helmet, with a portion of mail attached to it, now in the British Museum, is of this era. We must refer this ingenious construction to the Orientals, amongst whom we have thus the earliest record of it, and with whom, to this hour, it is found to be in use. But besides this, the padded garments, used so much in the fourteenth

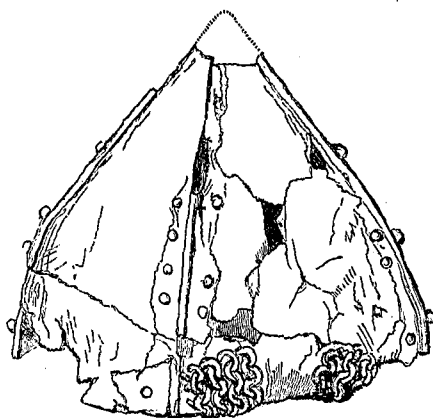


Fig. 1.

century, were of Oriental origin, and are represented on the Assyrian marbles. Seeing that we get these additions from such a source, might we not reasonably look for a suggestion respecting banded mail, to the same "unchanging East"? We may be assured that the banded-mail was a simple affair enough to give an additional advantage to the ordinary chain-mail, and involved no grave difficulties.

A year or two ago I purchased a hawberk of chain-mail, of Asiatic workmanship, and probably from Northern India, which appears to me to decide this very interesting question. The simplicity of the additional constructions at once commends itself, as answering all the conditions required, besides giving the general effect as seen in our ancient monuments. The collar is rendered rather more rigid by the introduction of leathern thongs, passed through each intermediate line of rings, thus giving an effective and additional protection, insuring at the same time the requisite flexibility (see annexed cut, fig. 2). No expedient could possibly be more simple, and none so

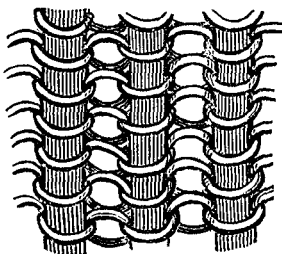


Fig. 2.

likely to be adopted for the purpose. It indeed gives the additional protection by means of a material, thoroughly flexible, which had been in use from the earliest times in defensive armour. Among the Asiatic hawberks, in the Museum of the United Service, are some which exhibit a similar mode of manufacture; but felt is used in some examples, and the collar is rendered still more rigid.* In fact, this could easily be done when required. I cannot, therefore, doubt but that here is the solution of this oft-debated question, and it has turned out, as so frequently happens, that truth, far sought for, lay really before our eyes.

The other details are full of interest, as parts of military costume. Beneath the loose sleeves of the hawberk, is a scaly or plumose defence of the fore arm, which I am inclined to consider may be intended to represent whalebone, rather than overlapping pieces of leather, because some of the scales have the indication of a ridge, which is more consistent with a harder material, though possibly, cuir bouilli might have been so formed. The coudes, or elbow pieces, and the épaulières, or shoulder defences, are the beginnings of a long

* Mr. Bernhard Smith has also some varieties of the same construction in his collection, and concurs with me, that it represents the "banded mail."

series of changes and additions, ceasing only with the use of armour itself. The scalloped garment, which peeps out beneath the skirt of the hawberk, from the round buttons upon its surface, is doubtless a pour-point—a lightly padded garment, much used, and often most elaborately worked. The genouillère is highly ridged—an advance upon the primitive form; the surcoat is also modified by being cut in front;* the large shield is suspended by a guige, or long strap, and the chain attached to a mammelière doubtless suspends, or is attached to, his helmet, which is, however, not seen, as the head rests upon a cushion richly diapered.

The female figure, having a dog with collar of bells at her feet, is remarkable in many ways. She wears an ample over-skirt, lined with minever, and apparently sleeveless, having openings only for the arms. A large gorget or wimple is worn, covering throat and neck up to and over the chin; the head shews the hair, which is plaited in bands on either side, and rests on a similar cushion to that of the knight. But the most distinctive portion of her costume is the fur-lined hood, which hangs down in lappets in front, having numerous buttons and button-holes. This is not met with on English monuments, but frequently in those of this period in France, many of them being represented in Montfaucon's 'Antiquités de la France.' As there are also details of workmanship, or convention, seen in the faces of both figures, which do not accord with our ordinary English examples of the fourteenth century, we may fairly assume, that this is the work of a French hand; and from this fact alone it would present much interest, independently of the many

* Sir Samuel Meyrick thought this to be the Cyclos.

details it exhibits, and of the circumstances above given.

The monument or monuments represent Sir John de Northwode and Joan de Badlesmere his wife. He died May 26th, 1320, and his wife on the 1st day of June following. There can, therefore, be no doubt but, that both brasses were executed at the same time; as there is evidence, in the style of the work, that they also must have been from the same hand. The inscription has long been lost, and no sort of record seems ever to have been taken of it. In the Harleian MS., 3917, a volume of 'Church Notes,' by Philipot, from the county of Kent, occur some rude sketches of monuments of the Northwood family. Unfortunately, the name of the church from which they were taken is omitted; but it was, without doubt, Minster, in Sheppey. One of these (on page 85 *b*) is a coffin-shaped slab, with the head of a knight, in coif of mail, sculptured at the top; in the centre, the arms of Northwood; and at base, the figure of a dove. Another (on p. 86 *a*) exhibits a knight cross-legged, about to draw his sword, a female figure by his side, with hands conjoined in prayer, and in long robe. There are four escutcheons of arms, two at the head and two at the feet, consisting only of the arms of Northwood, and one, paly wavy of six which arms are simply repeated. There is no inscription, nor can I assign the latter arms to any family in the Northwood pedigree; but these same arms (blazoned *or* and *gules*) were also in the Churches at Appledore, Sittingbourne, and Lenham, according to this MS. (pp. 31 *a*, 38 *b*, 60 *b*). Another rude sketch (on p. 85 *a*) is of a knight, with his head upon a helmet, and crest of dragon's head, two escutcheons of arms gone, with this inscription

at the feet,—“*Hic jacet Walterus Northwod cum quatuor suis filiis, verus hæres Domini de Northwod.*” I cannot find this Walter in the pedigree, but should assign the memorial to the end of the fourteenth century, though the sketch is too rude to trust in details. Weever, in his ‘Funeral Monuments,’ mentions, under Minster, one to a knight and lady as in the choir, and he gives this inscription,—“*Hic jacet Rogerus de Northwood Miles et Boon uxor ejus sepulti ante conquestum.*” He is so inaccurate a writer, probably using very slight notes made by others, that we can never trust him implicitly. This is obviously wrong, and he himself remarks upon the “ante conquestum.” The form “post conquestum Angliæ” is often found, and possibly there may be here some corruptions arising from this. The Roger de Northwood alluded to, however, must have been the father of Sir John, whose monument is under consideration, and his wife, Bona Fitzbernard or Wanton, spelt variously Waltham or Walton. But, as already very interesting and complete genealogical notices of the family have appeared in Vol. II. of ‘*Archæologia Cantiana*,’ it is unnecessary here to do more than follow up the few facts relating to the personal history of Sir John, the son, whose monument does not seem to have been referred to, or noticed, in any of the notes which I have cited.

His father, Sir Roger, died in 1286, on the 9th day of November, at which time John, his son, was thirty-one years old. He married Joan, the daughter of Bartholomew, Baronde Badlesmere; and the first official notice of him is in 1291, as serving the office of Sheriff of the county of Kent. During the latter part of the year, this office was held for him by Richard de Comb

and his son Simon. In the following year he was associated in the same office with John de Bourne.* On the 8th of June, he was summoned to attend the King upon urgent affairs, immediately on the receipt of the writ; but was excepted, on the 14th of the same month, from the general summons made to those holding by military tenure, for the expedition into Gascony. In the two years succeeding, he was again Sheriff of the county. On the 7th July, in the next year (1297), he was, by writ, ordered to perform military service in person beyond seas; to muster in London on Sunday next after the octave of St. John the Baptist. And at the end of the same month, viz., 30th July, he was appointed assessor in the County of Sussex, of the Eighth and Fifth granted for the Confirmation of the Charter. It does not seem by this, and what now follows, that he could have accompanied the King to Gascony, for, on the 8th September, he was summoned to appear, with horses and arms, at a Military Council at Rochester, before Edward, the King's son, Lieutenant of England; and again, on 8th January (1298), to be ready to perform military service against the Scots, the muster being made on the King's return to England. This was renewed on 25th May, the army being at York. He doubtless attended the army, and performed this required service, and we hear no more of him until 1299-1300, when he was again Sheriff of the county. The last special service he seems to have been called upon to perform, during this reign, was when made an assessor and collector, 1304-5, in the Cinque Ports, of the Fifteenth granted in Parliament, the commission being dated February 15th; and in the same year, inquests were

* Philipot Villare Cantianum.

taken before him in the counties of Sussex, Surrey, and Kent, of matters to be determined before Roger le Brabazon.

In the succeeding reign he seems to have been equally active in employment, and, in the first year, was appointed one of the conservators of the peace in his own county. A few months later (February 8, 1308) he and his wife were called upon to attend the coronation, in the train of the King and Queen. In 1309, he was once more summoned to service in person, against the Scots, to the muster at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on Michaelmas-day. Later, in the same year, he was one of the Justices to receive complaints of prises taken contrary to the statute, and on April 1, was enjoined to be more active in executing the commission for conserving of the peace. The following year, he offered the service of one knight's fee, for all his lands, to be performed by "two servientes," with two barded horses, for the muster at Tweedmouth, and was also one of the supervisors of the array in his county. On the 13th of March, 1313, he was summoned to Parliament at Westminster, and again on the 8th of July, as a Baron; also for the 23rd of September, and 21st of April following.

Once more, 15th August, 1314, his name occurs amongst those ordered to take service in person against the Scots, and he was also summoned to a Parliament at York the 9th September ensuing; again, at Westminster, 20th January, 1315. We have now a proof that his military summons was performed duly, for he was requested by a writ, dated 30th August, to continue stationed in the northern parts during the winter campaign, and to repair to the King on the feast of All Saints next. He was called to Parliament

at Lincoln the following 27th January, 1316, and in October following obtained a writ of exoneration from service. On the 5th March, 1317, he was certified as Lord of the townships of Harrietsham, Thornham, and Shorne, in Kent, and of Linton in Cambridgeshire. He was summoned to Parliament at Lincoln 27th January the following year (1318), but it was prorogued to 12th March, and again to 19th June, in consequence of an invasion of the Scots, of which he was informed, being addressed as one of the "Majores Barones;" and he was again called upon, for military service against that active enemy, to muster at York 26th July, 1318; which muster was, however, prorogued until the 25th August. On the 20th October he was summoned to a Parliament at York, and on the 10th June, the following year, he was *requested* to appear at the muster at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for military service against the old enemy, the Scots. Once more he was summoned to a Parliament at York on 6th May, and later in the month (22nd) was again requested to attend the muster as above, which had been prorogued until July 22nd.

As he died only a few days after the date of the writ of summons, we may feel sure that he was not able to attend. Indeed the exoneration he had obtained doubtless is the cause of his being "requested," not summoned, to these services.* The repetition also may lead us to conclude he was too ill to obey. But it is clear, from these brief notices, that his life must have been an active one, since scarcely a year passes but what his name is registered as performing, or required to perform, some act of duty. He was fifty-nine years old at his death. John de Northwode,

* *Vide* for above facts the Parliamentary Writs.

the eldest son, having died during his lifetime, the next heir was Roger, a child of twelve years of age, by Agnes, daughter of Sir William Grandison, and therefore the lands were, by a mandate to Master Richard de Clare, escheator, taken into the King's hands. But previous to his decease, John de Northwode, senior, had conceded the manor of Northwode Chastiners to his daughter-in-law Agnes, his eldest son's widow, paying a fine of five marks to the King for a licence for so doing. He left three sons living, Thomas, Simon, and Humphrey, who, together with his grandson Roger above mentioned, William, John, Thomas, and Otho, were pronounced to be heirs.* The King granted to Bartholomew de Badlesmere for seventy marks the manors of Shorne, Harrietsham, Thornham, and Bengebury until the legal age of the heir.† The Inquisitiones post Mortem, taken after the death of Joan de Badlesmere, mention the following manors—Hunton, Badlesmere, Beausfeld, Schorne, Herietesham, two parts, Northwode, Middleton, Thorneham, Bengebery, and interests in Ospreng and Greenwich, as held by her.

* Abbrev. Rot. Orig. XIX. Ed. II.

† Do., do., XII. Ed. II.