

A HELM IN GOUDHURST CHURCH.

BY F. H. CRIPPS-DAY.

It is always interesting to identify an old English head-piece in one of our parish churches, and the object of this note is to bring to the notice of armour students the existence of one preserved in the parish church at Goudhurst (Figs. 1 and 2).

Of plate-armour before 1450 but a few scattered examples exist to-day such as the early harnesses in Castle Churburg in the Tirol¹ and the armour in Chartres Cathedral. But in England, we have only head-pieces to show what our craftsmen could do. That there was a distinct English school is proved by the fact that our English effigies show individual features, and by some scattered documents with such references as "basinettis de fasshun de London" (1399) and "ganteles à la facon d'Angleterre" (1438), etc.

In the days of Henry III and Edward I, the only part of the Knight's equipment which called for the hammerman's art was the head-piece; it was the work of a special craftsman, called a "heaumer", first mentioned in a document of 1298, when one "Mannekin le Heaumer" received the thanks of the King for taking charge of some soldiers sent to Scotland (*London Letter Book*, "E", fo. lxxxiiiij); thereafter there is frequent mention of them in old MSS., together with some foreign "heaumers" permitted to work in London. Many of these "heaumers" occupied good positions in the City of London, and in their wills bequeathed considerable property. In 1322 the *Regulations* for the craft were made by the armourers of London—"armerer" being now a comprehensive term for those who made plate-armour. Plate-armour, for the most part, now replaced mail and leather in the Knight's equipment. These "armerers"

¹ This is described in Mann: *The Armoury of the castle of Churburg.*

included many "heaumers", and the Guild Regulations of 1322 dealt especially with head-pieces (*London Letter Books*, "E", fo. cxxxiiij). In 1347 the "heaumers" broke away from the Mystery of Armourers who had drawn up the Regulations of 1322, with which guild they had been associated. Thirty years later they allied themselves with the "smiths", the forerunners of the City Company of Armourers and Braziers.

The English "heaumers" were sufficiently important and powerful enough to prevent the sale in London of continental helms and bacinets (Thomas: *Cal. of Select Pleas*, 1381-1412, year 1383, p. 36), and they could not have done this unless they could have produced head-pieces of fine quality. I have referred to the mention in 1399 of London bacinets (Sharpe: *Cal. of Wills, Ct. of Hustings*, II, 340). In the Tower the staff of "King's Armourers" included a William de Swynle, "the King's helmet-maker" (*Close Rolls*, Ed. III vol. xiv (1375, p. 233), just as there was a "hauberger" (later the "Brigandarius"), a "cross-bow maker", a "fletcher", etc. This William de Swynle may have made the Black Prince's helm in Canterbury Cathedral, which however is inferior in craftsmanship to the Pembroke helm from Hereford Cathedral, now in the Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

One bacinet exists to-day, first exhibited by Pratt, the armour dealer, to the British Archæological Association in 1852, and now in the collection of Mr. J. G. Mann, which is perhaps of English-make, for it belongs to a group of head-pieces depicted in English brasses and effigies, of which the best examples are the effigies of c. 1325-30 in Ash and Sandwich Churches in Kent. The later form of bacinet with which we are most familiar, repeated on most effigies of 1360-1440, is common to England, Germany, Italy and France. We cannot therefore call it "British", although it was the form portrayed by all the alabaster tomb-makers of that period. The Ightham effigy is a very good example. We have to bear in mind that although many specimens of this common form of bacinet exist

abroad, yet we cannot but remember that Simon de Winchecombe did mention in his will of 1399 "basinettis de fasshun de London". Nor can we forget that the tomb-maker and brass founder repeated over and over again the same design once adopted at their works. A fifteenth century knight ordered his effigy, or his family ordered his effigy, as one of a knight in armour; it was not necessarily a portrait, indeed it seldom was. It meant often no more than a memorial emblematic of his devotion to arms. If, however, I cannot cite the existence to-day of more than one English bacinet, because the vast majority of existing bacinets are of a type common to many countries, helmets of the fifteenth century of English-make are fairly numerous. We call them "English" because they present features never met with abroad. There is an unbroken chain of English helmets from those of the Black Prince and Pembroke down to the productions from 1510 of the Greenwich workshops founded by Henry VIII.

Anyone who has the time to enjoy a week's walking may after a Monday morning in Westminster Abbey, the Tower, and the Wallace Collection, look in at Cobham, and via Canterbury visit Ashford, and Worthing (for Broadwater) returning to London by Petworth and Goudhurst. Birling and Lullingstone are but walks from Cobham, Chart and Brabourne are near Ashford. In a week he will have seen in Kent, or within a few miles of the County a series of helmets, the like of which cannot be paralleled in France, Germany, Italy or Spain, and not only will he have been able to admire the forging of these fine helmets, but he will have felt the call of romance, which must have cast its spell upon him, when he looked up at the helm which the Black Prince wore at Crécy, the helm which Henry V wore at Agincourt, another which once hung over the tomb of Henry VII, and one which a Nevill wore when he tilted at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and lastly that on the foot-combat suit of Henry VIII, forged by Henry's own Italian armourers at Southwark.

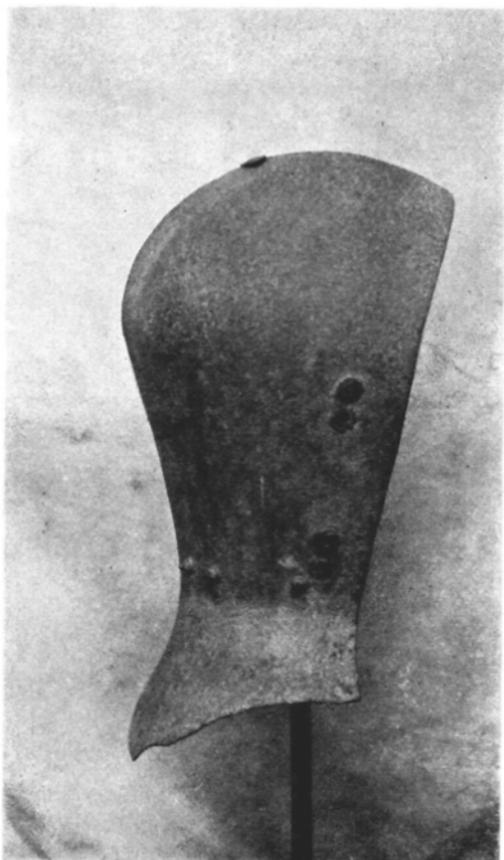
The parish church of Goudhurst possesses the skull-piece

of a helm, which has so far escaped the discriminating eye of armour students. It hangs high up on the wall of the eastern bay of the south aisle "in a recess projecting outwards from the wall and carried up its full height, exactly like a window in the great hall of a Tudor house"¹ In this recess is a tomb-chest on which rest the wooden effigies of Sir Alexander "Colepepyr" and his wife. The tomb is dated 1537. Sir Alexander was the father of Sir Thomas Culpeper, Sheriff of Kent in the reign of Edward VI and Mary. (Figs. 1 and 2.)

As there is no apparent remnant of any hinge or hole for a rivet I was at first inclined to think that this skull-piece had been cut down, so that visor and chin-piece of later form, like those of a close-helmet, could be fitted as in the Penshurst helm (Laking: *Record*, vol. II, Fig. 490), but I think the skull-piece was never of such a bacinet-shape, covering the whole top of the head as in the Bourg-en-Bresse and Dijon helms (*Ibid.*, Fig. 484-5), or in the Little Chart head-piece (*Ibid.*, Fig. 491a). I believe it is far more probable that the helm was purchased from an armourer for the funeral, and that it came out of his stock, ready for sale with the necessary visor-pieces for tilt or barrier unadjusted, leaving the purchaser free to have them fitted with the necessary hinges and rivets. There can be no doubt that in such a case as the Scott helm (*Ibid.*, Fig. 454) this is the explanation of the absence of any sign of means of adjustment, and many other cases could be cited. It may also be the explanation why the skull-piece and buffes of some church helms are so rivetted that no human head could get into them, as at Lullingstone (Mann: *Antiq. Jour.*, vol. VII, p. 136). They must have been bought for a funeral in pieces and rivetted by the village blacksmith.

As to the nature of the visor-piece of the Goudhurst helm, I think that it is probable that it resembled that on the Birling helm (Laking: *Record*, vol. II, Fig. 489); when in the armourer's shop it may have possessed a second

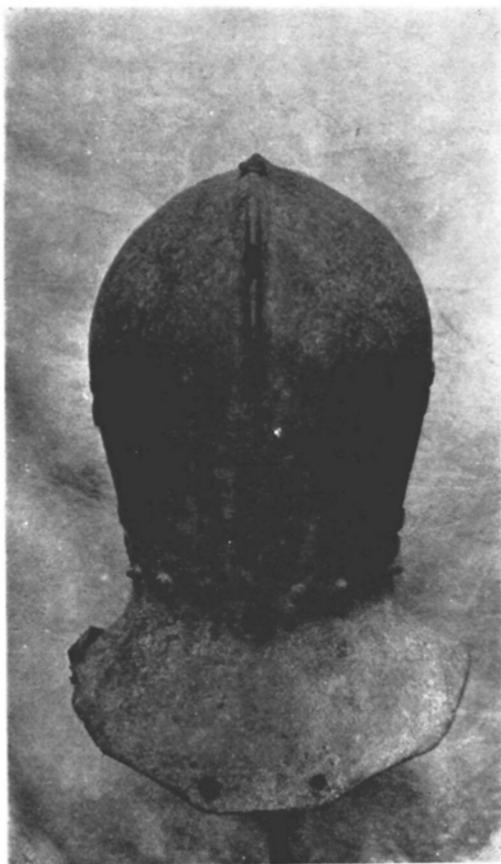
¹ P. M. Johnston: *The Church of St. Mary, Goudhurst*, p. 13.



THE CULPEPER HELM IN GOUDHURST CHURCH.

Side view. See p. 226.

FIG. 1.



THE CULPEPER HELM IN GOUDHURST CHURCH.

Back view. See p. 226.

FIG. 2.

visor for foot-combat, in which case there would have been a short bevor-piece in addition, such as is seen in the Brooke helm in Cobham (*Ibid.*, Fig. 486), or the Aylesbury helm (*Ibid.*, Fig. 486a), or there may have been a kind of gorget-plate as in the Gostwick helm (*Ibid.*, Fig. 488).

The latten-rimmed holes were for the laces which adjusted the arming-cap inside. Similar eyelet holes are to be seen in the Capel helm (*Ibid.*, Fig. 492), and the helm with such a cap, all laced, is beautifully illustrated in one of A. Dürer's drawings.

When achievements of arms were placed over a church monument or tomb of an important knight, some head-piece of the deceased, usually taken from his armoury and carried at the funeral, was later suspended over the place of burial; sometimes, however, the helm was purchased for the funeral, and I have suggested that this was done in the Goudhurst case.

In most early achievements only the head-piece has stood the ravages of time, of the iconoclast, or of the careless guardians of church property. The preservation of such a complete example as in Canterbury is unique, but there is every reason to suppose that a complete achievement was part of the proper honour, paid to the memory of a great prince. We know, for example, that Richard III suspended over the tomb of Henry VI in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, a complete achievement. After the middle of the sixteenth century they are not rare, for the heralds made achievements the fashion for the *parvenu* nobility; we find helm, sword, tabard, spurs, shield, and gauntlets, complete, as in the churches of St. Mary, Redcliffe (Bristol), Kingston (Kent), Canon's Ashby (Northants), Exton (Rutland), Kimbolton (Hunts), and Aldershot (Hants). The supply of the different parts became the perquisite of the Heralds; after the funeral the family often purchased them. They were in fact "Herald properties". Such properties are never of earlier date than of Elizabeth's reign.

I date the Goudhurst head-piece as of the last years of the fifteenth century, or the first years of the sixteenth century.

It is almost exactly like the skull-piece of the Birling helm (Lord Edward Nevill of Addington was executed in 1538), and that of the helm over the tomb of Sir John Pechy (1522) in Lullingstone Church. It is somewhat later than the Darell helm in Little Chart Church (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, Fig. 491); other examples of the work of English helm makers of the same period as that of the Goudhurst head-piece, are the Stowe helm in the Tower (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, Fig. 499), and the Brooke helm in Cobham (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, Fig. 486).

I have in my *Fragmenta Armamentaria* noted the possible Greenwich origin of the Capel, Aylesbury and Gostwick helms, already referred to, but in my opinion the Goudhurst helm was forged some ten years before the Greenwich shops were opened by Henry VIII.