

Note on an Ancient Effigy existing in the Parochial Church  
of S. Mary (formerly of S. Andrew,) Hitchin.

A recumbent effigy, of Purbeck marble, the most western of those deposited in the sills of the windows of the north aisle in this church, is of great interest from its rare antiquity, and its presumable historical associations.

It represents a knight habited in a complete suit of chain-mail armour. The head, incased in the *coife-de-mailles*, rests on a *lozenge* cushion. The exposed portion of the face is mutilated. A loose-fitting, sleeveless surcoat, confined at the waist by a narrow strap, covers the body; and opening in front above the knees exposes the lower part of the *hauberk*, and falls in loose folds to the lower extremity of the figure, which is mutilated about six inches below the knees. The right hand, protected by a gauntlet of mail continuous with the sleeve of the hauberk, and without finger divisions, is turned upwards and rests on the breast. The left arm is concealed by the *kite-shaped* shield, which reaches from the shoulder to a short distance below the knees: it is suspended from a wide *guige*, which passes over the right shoulder. The shield is damaged at the top and lower extremity: the rough surface may have been covered with a metal plate. A broad belt ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide), girded a little above the hips, once supported the sword (apparently on the right side), a detached fragment only of this now remains. The legs, which are crossed, are cased in *chausses of mail*, without *knee-plates*. The surface of the marble is much corroded, but the uninjured portions show careful representation of the chain-mail, and of the drapery. The effigy in its mutilated state is about six feet long, when perfect it must have extended beyond seven feet. The width at the shoulders is about 1ft. 8in. No device or inscription exists to identify the person represented.

The monument may be compared with three of the well-known recumbent effiges of knights, existing in the Temple Church, London. Two of the figures referred to (which are of Purbeck marble), belong to the southern of the two groups disposed in the circular nave of the church; the third to the northern. The former two resemble this Hitchin sculpture in the attitude of the limbs, and in the accoutrements, with one exception,

the head being covered with a cylindrical, flat-topped helmet (the *chapelle de fer*). The third figure, which has the *coife-de-mailles*, is similar in every particular to the monument before us (as far as the mutilations of the latter allow of the comparison being made). All these knights have the *kite-shaped* shield reaching a few inches below the knees. The coifed figure has the sword girded on the right side, the shield plain. After careful inspection, its close resemblance to this memorial appeared very striking. Stodhard (in his "Monumental Effigies,") assigns the monuments described to the latter part of the twelfth century. It seems to be a generally accepted opinion, that they are older than the present Round Church (which was dedicated in 1185), and were brought from the more ancient \*church of the Templars, which stood near Southampton Buildings in Chancery Lane, and of which the foundations were discovered about the year 1700. †The figures are not identified, but they may be assumed to commemorate either Templars or knights who were benefactors to that order.

The length of the shield appears to be the best criterion of the date of such early sculptures. The shields of the time of the conquest (as depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry), reached from the head to the feet of the warrior (when dismounted). In the effigy of Geoffrey Plantagenet, the father of Henry II, on an enamelled tablet, formerly in the church of S. Julian, Mans, and now preserved in the museum, the shield extends to the feet. The length of this appendage appears to have been gradually diminished till the beginning of Henry III's reign. The great seal of Richard I. represents him armed with a shield approaching the *heater-shaped* pattern, and considerably shorter than that of this Hitchin monument. Mr. W. de G. Birch, of the British Museum, to whom I showed a sketch of the Hitchin effigy, attributed it to the latter part of the twelfth century.

The cross-legged, mail-coifed effigy of Sir Walter de Dunstanvill, now in the Abbey Church of the Holy Cross, Shrewsbury, strongly resembles our monument in general style and appointments, although differing in

\* "Herbert's Antiquities of the Inns of Court."

† These temple sculptures have been so skilfully repaired, that it is not possible now to discover what defects have been supplied by new work. This restoration of course diminishes their value as antique specimens.

the attitude of the right hand, which grasps the hilt of the sword. The shield in this example is absent. \*This warrior took an active part in the affairs of Henry II.'s reign. The effigy is said to have been removed from Wombridge Priory, where he died, c. 1195.

There appear to be good grounds for believing that our Hitchin sculpture was executed somewhat earlier than the close of Henry II.'s reign (A.D. 1189). Thus the way is prepared for identifying the person commemorated to a very high degree of probability.

Salmon mentions the tradition that the effigy was brought here from Temple Dinsley, when the chapel of the Preceptory of the Templars there was demolished.† Clutterbuck states [Hist. Herts. vol. III. p. 37] that "it probably represents one of the Baliols, who were Lords of the Manor of Hitchin before Edward I." There are well-authenticated instances of the removal of monuments from monastic to parochial churches—e.g. that of the tomb of Edmund de Langley, now in King's Langley church. Both the tradition and Clutterbuck's conjecture are consistent with documentary local history.

In the reign of Henry II. the manor of *Hicche* (Hitchin) was possessed by a Baliol, who had held it under King Stephen, and was the same person who founded the House of the Templars at Temple Dinsley. This was Bernard de Baliol: and whether the effigy was brought from Temple Dinsley, or not, all the local circumstances are in favour of its being his memorial.

The records of this family, collected by Clutterbuck, are of considerable historical interest. It appears from the Roll of Battle Abbey, that a Pierre de Baliol [who probably derived his surname from Bailleul in Flanders] came over with the Conqueror. Guy de Baliol [whose relationship to Pierre is not ascertained], was made Baron of Biwell (in Northumberland) by William Rufus, who granted to him the Manor of Dinsley ["Deneslai" in the Domesday Survey], in Wedelee, or Preston, in which constablewick, the castle of Dinsley, was situated. This manor was inherited by his son, Bernard de Baliol, who bestowed it on the Knights Templars in endowment of the Preceptory, which he founded (1145-53) in the locality since called Temple Dinsley, situated four miles

\* See Archæological Journal, vol. XII. p. 210.

† Salmon's Herts, Ed. 1728. p. 164.

due south of Hitchin, and within this parish. It is probable that Bernard de Baliol resided occasionally at the castle near his preceptory. He was a brave supporter of King Stephen, who conferred on him the Royal Manor of *Hicce* (Hitchin), to be held "*in capite* by the service of two knights' fees, as an augmentation of his Barony of Biwell."

In 1137 he was sent (in company with Robert Brus) by Thurstan, Archbishop of York, to negotiate with David, King of Scotland, who was threatening invasion: and, on the failure of this mission, he took part in the "Battle of the Standard," at North Allerton, where the Scottish army was overthrown. He adhered to Stephen in all his fortunes, and at the battle of Lincoln in 1141 was taken prisoner with the king. His grant to the Templars was made after his release, and before the death of Stephen. He appears to have been admitted to favour by Henry II., after having incurred his displeasure and a fine in 1166; to have been confirmed in his possessions at Hitchin, and entrusted with important commands. When William the Lion was invading Northumberland in 1174, he was among the Barons of the Northern Army, who surprised and captured the Scottish King in a fog at Alnwick.

\*The Chronicle, known as that of Benedict of Peterborough, names the following leaders as associated with "Bernardus de Baillol" on this occasion:—"Robert de Stutevil, William de Vesci, Randolf de Granvill, Randolf de Thilli, and Odenellus de Dumfravill."

He is said to have been the founder of Bernard's Castle on the Tees. He was a benefactor to S. Mary's Abbey at York, and to the Abbey of Rievaulx.

His grant of Dinsley was made with much ceremony at a chapter of the Templars held at Paris, in the presence of Pope Eugenius III., the King of France (Louis VII.) and 130 Knights of the Order clad in white mantles. The grant was confirmed by King Stephen. The name of the Pope determines the date between 1145 and 1153. As in the 3rd of Stephen, Bernard was of an age to be entrusted with an important commission, it is not probable that he survived to the end of Henry II's reign (1189).

That a knight, deeply imbued (as his history evinces),

\*Chron. Benedict. vol. I. p. 66, Rolls Series.

with the religious sentiment of the age, should have provided for his interment in the *Preceptory* he had founded at Dinsley, is a reasonable supposition. It is known that the Knights of S. John there (the successors of the Templars), were bound by their charters to maintain two chaplains to say masses in the Preceptory chapel for the souls of their feoffors—(temp. Edward III.) The descendants of Bernard continued to be lords of Hitchin to the fourth generation, and took an important part in public affairs. His great-grandson, John de Baliol, who supported Henry III. in his wars with the Barons, was the founder of Baliol College, Oxford, A.D. 1268. The foundation was completed by his widow Dervorguilla, from whom their son derived his title to the crown of Scotland. John de Baliol, King of Scotland, forfeited the Manor of Hitchin to Edward I., in 1296. In the next reign the manor appears to have passed to the Kendales, whose memorials are in this church.

The arms of Baliol were—*gules, an Orle Argent.*

It is to be regretted that this interesting effigy is now in a position very unfavourable for its inspection.