

ARMOUR IN WILLS.

By The VISCOUNT DILLON, Hon. M.A. Oxon., F.S.A.

One point which strikes one with regard to the wearing and use of armour is that in the mediaeval wills, so many of which have been transcribed and printed by individuals and societies, while we find most minute notices of garments of all sorts, furs, etc., the mention of armour is comparatively seldom, and yet, judging from effigies and brasses, so many of the well-to-do personages of those days chose to be represented in marble, alabaster or brass, covered from head to foot in complete steel. Of course even to our day the idea has found favour with some, as witness the effigy of the late Prince Consort at Windsor. But we are rather accustomed to look on the knights of the Middle Ages as all soldiers, whereas, even as now-a-days, there seemed to have been many very peaceful gentlemen enjoying knightly dignity who from their professions were quite unassociated with war, yet when dead wished to be remembered and represented as warriors. Take the case of the eminent grocer Sir John Crosby, who lies in St. Helen's, Bishopsgate; a fine specimen and authority for armour of his period. Did he ever put on that panoply or bare that sword, now lost? and if he did not, can we accept the charming effigy of Lady Crosby as the authority for the costume of a city dame of 1466, the year in which she died? The worthy alderman who died nine years later is an interesting instance of the combination of civil and military costume, as he wears his aldermanic gown over a suit of armour. He may have had to put on the latter during the Wars of the Roses, but as far as is known, beyond being sheriff in 1470 and receiving Edward IV. on his entry into London in 1471, when he had the honour of knighthood, and probably the collar of suns and roses which he wears, nothing is known of his military service. The com-

bination of civil and military costume on a monument, but of a later date [1527], is seen in the brass of Sir Peter Legh in Winwick Church, Lancashire. This knight, on the death of his wife, having entered the church, his commemorative brass shows him in armour but bare-headed and wearing over his plate armour a chasuble and, as Hewitt remarks, tonsured at the head and spurred at the heel.

Perhaps we might find on enquiry that human nature was the same in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as now, in this respect, that many wished to appear other than they really were. The Prince Consort, whose name and life were so intimately associated with the arts of peace, is certainly wrongly shown in warlike guise.

And where armour is mentioned in wills, the note of complete suits is scarcer still. A good sword, whether one worn by a soldier or the civilian basildard, was an important item in a man's property, and these do pretty frequently occur in wills; but the armour which we see so profusely illustrated in effigies, brasses, illuminated MSS. and other places is seldom mentioned. We have in 1399 Sir Philip d'Arcy bequeathing unam loriam de Milayne, in 1430 William Stowe making a like bequest, and in 1485 Richard Scrope leaves "the harness I brought from Fraunce." But these are foreign armour and probably better worth mentioning in a will than the home-made article.

Helmets and *portions* of armour are common enough, and even the pourpointed garments, the aketons and the partly metal, partly textile, jacks, brigandines are mentioned. Armour for the arms, legs and feet, and also gauntlets, are bequeathed in 1391 by the widow of Sir William Aldeburgh, who had probably kept them and her late husband's basenett, with a ventaylle and a breastplate, as memorials of him.

Leg armour certainly is not frequent, and this bears out the contention that what we see so often in memorials of individuals did not often exist.