

## THE LATE SIR HAROLD BRAKSPEAR, K.C.V.O.

My first acquaintance with Harold Brakspear dates from almost exactly forty years ago, when he, as a young and, I think, recently qualified architect, was called in by my uncle, Charles Henry Talbot, to do some repairs to the sixteenth-century work at the north side of the great courtyard at Lacock Abbey. Before that time, the only piece of work which stood to his credit, but of which he was never particularly proud, was the Board School at Corsham, a building which was sufficient for its purpose, but which has little in common with the medieval work with which his name is inseparably connected. Soon after this, some repairs undertaken in the cloister of the Abbey led to the discovery and unblocking of the beautiful entrance to the chapel house, and other claustral buildings, and he was now fairly launched on the career of investigation, excavation and preservation of medieval religious houses which was the absorbing interest of his life, though I think that Lacock always remained his first love. His work at such places as Malmesbury, Beaulieu, Battle, and, above all, St. George's, Windsor, is known to our readers, and does not require to be dwelt on here, but as one who was bound to him by a friendship of forty years' standing, I should like to bear testimony to the almost uncanny *flair* which he possessed, enabling him to say beforehand where wall-foundations could be traced, and to have the satisfaction of finding his prediction justified. Once at Ludlow, when I had come over to see him and W. St. John Hope while they were working at the keep of the castle, I found that Hope had said that the Norman foundation would be met with in one place, Brakspear in another; and while we were in another part of the work, Hope came up and said, 'Rejoice greatly, for that which thou hast said has come to pass.' Brakspear had been right in his diagnosis or prognosis, or whatever is the right word to use.

He was a man of strong convictions, in archaeology as in other matters, and those convictions were often strongly expressed; but nothing suited him better than to have the opposite view maintained as strongly, so long as no personal animosity intervened. I often had the temerity to differ from him (and I was usually wrong); but nothing ever clouded our personal friendship, and in his death, the world is poorer by the loss of an architectural authority of outstanding ability, a sincere Christian and a faithful friend.

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