

ON A BRASS IN THE POSSESSION OF THE SURREY ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.¹

By J. G. WALLER, F.S.A.

THE interesting brass which I am about to describe was presented to the Surrey Archæological Society by the Rev. H. B. Greene, of Longparish, Hants, in 1861. It is said to have been formerly in the church of Netley Abbey, and that it commemorates a knight and lady of the Compton family. It was first noticed in a communication to the Society of Antiquaries, by John Latham, M.D., F.S.A. (vide *Archæologia*, Vol. XV, p. 302), where is an engraving of it. There is also a woodcut in Boutell's *Monumental Brasses and Slabs*, 1847. It is a square plate, measuring 19 inches by 19 inches, and the general appearance of the design accords with that of Flemish brasses, viz., the figures are given upon a diapered background: thus Mr. Boutell has attributed it to that class. But the execution, in every way, is that which belongs to the English type, for it does not follow that because it is carried out in the mode usual with Flemish brasses, that it is necessarily to be so assigned. Many of our later examples follow that fashion, and some Flemish follow the English type, cutting figures to the outline without backgrounds. The two figures, knight and lady, kneeling almost in profile, have the hands conjoined in prayer, the lady a little distance behind. A scroll is from the mouth of each; that from the knight has this legend:

“*Unā peccij a dno hanc requirā ut ī habitē in domo dñi*”

¹ The Society is indebted to J. J. Howard, Esq., L.L.D., F.S.A., for the illustration accompanying this paper.



A KNIGHT AND LADY OF THE COMPTON FAMILY, C. 1500.

From the original Brass in the possession of the Surrey Archæological Society. Size 19in. by 19in.

part of the fourth verse of the 27th Psalm. That from the lady is :

“*Tibi dixit cor meū exquisibit te facies mea faciē tuā*”

part of the eighth verse of the same.

The knight is in complete armour, bare-headed, with long flowing hair, a fashion prevalent at the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th. His broad-toed *sabbatons* would place the date to the commencement of the last-named period. But some of the details would carry us back a little; for the shoulder-pieces are but a slight remove from what is seen in the figure of Sir Antony Grey, in the Abbey Church of St. Alban's, 1480. Around his neck is a collar or standard of mail, and a skirt of the same appears beneath the *taces* which defend the lower part of the body, and singularly enough the *tuiles*, generally attached to them pendant over the thighs, are here very long, and appear from *beneath* the skirt of mail. It is difficult to understand in what way they are thus attached, and if not a mistake of the artist, what advantage could possibly arise from such an arrangement.

The lady's figure does not differ from the conventional dress of the time. She has a close-fitting gown, with furred cuffs, over which is an ample mantle, with a cordon terminating in tassels. She wears a cap with veil-like lappets on each side, rising above the forehead somewhat pyramidically, a fashion which developed and lasted some time in the early part of the 16th century. She kneels upon a cushion, the roseate ornament upon which is common in English work, and the treatment of the pavement, diamond-shaped, divided into two parts perpendicularly, also accords with the same.

The heraldic character of the background is the chief interest of this brass. It forms a diaper in which the most conspicuous object is a beacon, shown as constructed of timber, cross-pieces of which make a stand upon which a pole uprises supporting a cresset of fire. To this a ladder is appended to ascend, in order that the fire may be attended to. Doubtless we have here a form in

common use for signalling at that time. There are four of these objects, two between the figures, and two behind the lady's figure. Wound about the pole is a scroll with the motto, "So have I cause." We then have dispersed what may be intended for a pine-apple or else a pine cone, it is not clear which. Interspersed with these is the well-known convention of a rose, very much seen in English work of the 15th century, and lastly a number of spots, or in heraldic terms, "plates." There is not in any part a single piece of detail which recalls the characters of Flemish design. It is solely in the general form, already alluded to, that any resemblance is seen, and at the end of the 15th and 16th centuries there are many such instances.

It appears that the beacon is borne by many families, viz., Shelly, Butler, Belknap, Mountford and Sudley, and it was used by Henry V after he came to the throne; it appears over his tomb in Westminster Abbey, associated with other devices used by him, such as the silver swan and antelope derived of the house of Bohun. It would be inaccurate to call this fire beacon a crest; it belongs rather to the class of badges, and possibly it was one favoured by the adherents of the House of Lancaster. The rose in the background would then be the red rose of that house. As these devices are heraldic, so also must be the pine cone or pine-apple whichever it may be, the significance of which is not so clear. In the present case the beacon is assumed to belong to one of the Compton family, and appears in the east window of Sopley Church, near Ringwood, in the county of Southampton, accompanied with the motto, "So have I cause," which identifies it with this brass.¹ The tradition that the latter came from Netley Abbey is feasible, and it is said to have been discovered in a poor man's house, where it served as a back to a grate, from whom it was obtained for a moderate gratuity. It is remarkable that, under such vicissitudes, it should have

¹ See *Archæologia*, XXI, 550.

sustained so little injury, for it is in excellent condition, in no way worn, and from its character was doubtless fixed on the wall, or rather on a raised altar tomb, on a dado above, as in many examples in the 15th century. From the way in which the figures are arranged, looking in the same direction one behind the other, it is most probable, that it only forms part of the original monument, and that some religious device, emblem of the Trinity or something of the kind, was in front of the figures; and doubtless some escutcheons of arms were arranged in the usual way, two above and two below.

It is doubtful whether it is rightly assigned to a member of the Compton family, unless the beacon appearing in the East window of Sopley Church can be shown to refer to any member of that family. But no register of it, in the *Visitation of the County of Hants*, taken in 1634, as used by the Comptons, is to be found.