

Two Historic Berkshire Portraits at Burlington House.

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THERE were two very interesting sixteenth-century portraits in the recently concluded Exhibition of British Art at Burlington House. One was of Sir Edward Hoby, lent by Lady Vansittart Neale, of Bisham Abbey; the other of Sir Henry Unton, of Wadley and Faringdon, lent by Mr. E. Peter Jones. The Hoby portrait is familiar to many, for it has a singular elegance and appeal apart from its historic interest. The Unton portrait, however, is not so nearly well known. It depicts a typical courtier of a sanguine complexion, with a neatly trimmed pike-devant beard and mustachios, and wearing a huge 'cart-wheel' ruff and richly brodered cloak visible on the left arm. The rakish angle of the black hat, with its ornament of table-cut jewels and pendant pear-shaped pearl, are typical of the age and the prevailing mode. A brief biography of the sitters may prove of interest.

Sir Edward Hoby (1560-1617) was a diplomatist and a favourite of James I. He was born at Bisham and was the son of Sir Thomas Hoby (1530-1566) and nephew of Sir Philip Hoby (1505-1558), half brother of Sir Thomas, whose recumbent effigies may still be seen in Bisham Church. Both father and uncle were distinguished diplomats and men of letters. Sir Edward's mother, Elizabeth, was the daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, of Gidea Hall, Essex. From Eton our subject passed to Trinity College, Oxford, where he graduated in 1576, and proceeded M.A. the same year. He obtained a dispensation for two years and two terms in order to travel on the continent, the usual prelude to a diplomatic career, and on his return he was advanced, through the good offices of his uncle Lord Burghley, high into court favour. He added to his

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Sir Edward Hoby.

affluence by marrying the daughter of Lord Hunsdon, a connection of Queen Elizabeth, and was knighted the day after his wedding. In 1584, he went on a special mission with his father-in-law to Scotland where he attracted the attention of James VI, who, on his accession to the throne of England as James I., continued to extend to Sir Edward the royal favour. In 1596, he accompanied an expedition to Cadiz and was made Constable of Queensborough Castle, where he died. In 1592, Queen Elizabeth visited him at Bisham and here he lies buried amid a host of great and historic figures.

Sir Henry Unton was educated at Oriel College, Oxford, but left it without a degree and travelled. After his return, according to Anthony à Wood, "being esteemed a person well qualified, he had some employment under Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Chancellor, who finding him a man of business and experience, commended him to the Queen." In 1586, he was present at the Siege of Zutphen, where his kinsman, Sir Philip Sydney, was slain, and on quitting the English camp on the 29th September he received the honour of knighthood at the hands of the Earl of Leicester. In 1591, he was appointed Ambassador to France, and departed on the 23rd July. He continued in attendance upon the French King's camp until the following June, when he departed from La Fere in Tartanoys (a fortified town in Picardy) convoyed by 120 horse on account of the dangerous state of the country, and returning by way of Dieppe and Dover, arrived at the Court on the 17th June, 1592. During this embassy, Sir Henry suffered considerably from ill-health, and he refers in correspondence to an attack of yellow jaundice with which he was troubled. In August, 1591, the Queen graciously condoles with him on his being sick of an ague at Dieppe and concludes with this very flattering farewell: "And so we ende, wishing you to have care of youre owne health, which we desire as much to heare of as any freind youe have, excepting youre owne wife." Health and an impoverished purse found Unton anxious to return home and he solicited leave to do so some months before it was granted. On his departure he was spoken of by King Henry in a letter to Elizabeth in the most handsome terms.

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Sir Henry Unton.

The spirited challenge which during his sojourn abroad, in or about March, 1592, Sir Henry Unton sent to the young Duke Henri de Guise, in gallant resentment of some disparagement cast on the honour of his royal mistress, has been more frequently related than any other feature of his history. He told the Duke that he had sent him two such challenges before, but never had any answer. On each occasion he took care to assert the dignity of his birth: "Nor would I have you to thinke any inequality of person between us, I being issued from as great a race and noble house (every way) as yourselfe." By this he was probably referring to his family's alliance with the Seymours, for his mother had been Anne, the Countess of Warwick, daughter of the Duke of Somerset and Protector of England during the minority of Edward VI.

Sir Henry Unton was elected Knight of the Shire for Berks in the Parliament of 35 Eliz. (1593.) In December, 1595, he went again as Ambassador to France. In a letter to the Lord Treasurer of the 17th March following, he mentions that he had then been for some days suffering from a malignant fever and had been abandoned by his physicians. He died on the 23rd of the same month. His body was brought to England, and, in consequence of his dying in the dignified position of Ambassador Leidger, his funeral honours were the same as those usually paid to a Baron. The following memorandum, *inter alia*, appears in the records of the College of Arms: "The sayd Sr. Henry Unton, Knight, dyed Lord Ambassador resident in France, in the French Kynges Campe lying before Lafere, from whence he was brought over to London, and from thence he was worshipfully accompanied and caryed in a coache to Wadley, and from thence he was caryed to Farringdon, in the County of Berks, and in the parish church there buried on Thursday the 8th day of July 1596, wth. a Baron's hearse, and in the degree of a Baron, because he dyed Ambassador Leidger for France."

The history of the portrait of Sir Henry Unton, an illustration of which appears in these pages, seems to be unknown; but

according to the Unton Inventories there was once in existence a very curious picture, commemorative of the history of the knight, which attracted considerable attention in the 18th century. It appears to have been of some size and recorded several incidents in Unton's career. In 1776, Strutt published in the third volume of his "Manners and Customs of the English," a portion of that part of the painting which represented the masque at Sir Henry Unton's marriage. "This plate," he stated, "is done from a large picture on board. . . . It contains a large portrait of Sir Henry Unton, and on either side the portrait is represented not only the most remarkable passages of his life, as his birth, his education, his travels, and his marriage, but also his death, his burial, and the monument (in Faringdon Church) which was afterwards erected for him. It was probably painted soon after his death at the desire of some of his family." Sir Henry Unton left no will; but administration of his effects was granted on the 6th April, 1596, to Cecilia Wentworth *alias* Unton and John Wentworth, Esq., her husband. Much additional information concerning Sir Henry and the other members of his family are contained in "The Unton Inventories," by John Gough Nichols, F.S.A., printed for the Berkshire Ashmolean Society in 1841, and to these Memoirs I am very largely indebted for the foregoing particulars.