

ART. XII.—*On a Ring recently found at Lanercost.* By the
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THIS ring was found in 1883, in a cottage garden just outside the old wall of the priory enclosure. It is about an inch in diameter, but laterally has been rather pressed out of its circular shape, thus probably showing that it has been worn. It may have been a thumb ring and worn over a glove. It is of copper, but has been gilt, traces of the gilding being left. The field of the shield has



been of blue enamel, the greater part remaining. Round it there has apparently been a margin of some other material, perhaps of gold. What the device has been is not quite clear, though most probably a lion rampant, queue fourchée: Braose bears azure, a lion rampant or, but the field should be covered with crosslets. However, from such a small shield, if the lion took up such a large part of it, it is quite possible that the crosslets were purposely omitted

omitted. If the lion was of real gold, perhaps it has been picked out by some thief, and at the same time the ring stripped of its thick gilding. Otherwise the device may have been of softer enamel, and so removed by the chemical action of the earth.

The age and use of the ring are difficult points : at first sight it would seem to be a knight's or nobleman's thumb ring of the 14th, 15th, or even the 16th century, such as that shown at Naworth Castle in a portrait* of the Duke of Norfolk, who was executed in 1572. But this is not the opinion of high authorities. Mr. J. C. Robinson, who happened to be staying at Lanercost, shortly after the discovery of the ring, at once pronounced it to be of extraordinary interest, and took it to London in order that he might get the opinion of Mr. Franks. It has been in the possession of the Society of Antiquaries for more than a year, but neither Mr. Franks nor anyone else ventured to express any decided opinion about it, except that it was of very early date. When the ring had been returned to me, I wrote to Mr. Robinson asking for his reasons for ascribing to the ring an earlier date than, say, the 16th century, and I conclude by subjoining his letter. I may add that the ring is the property of Mr. George Howard, of Naworth castle. Mr. Robinson writes :—

The only doubt I have about the date of the ring is as to whether it is not earlier than Edward I., but it may be fairly put as of his time, the heater shape shield is the conclusive indication of date, and the champlévé enamel agrees entirely as to epoch. We are all quite in the dark as to what kind of ring, *i.e.*, what purpose it was made for as a ring. The ring is unique. It is not at all likely to have been worn as a thumb ring. Any knight or great personage bearing coat armour would certainly not have had a bronze gilt and enamelled ring, but a real gold one, the former being mere 'Brummagem,' so to speak, even then. It strikes me now, on the spur of the moment, that this ring may have been a sepulchral or typical ring interred with some abbot or bishop. Investiture rings were often of merely nominal value.

* There, however, the bezel is circular.