

CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS THE HISTORY OF MEDIÆVAL
ARMOUR AND WEAPONS IN EUROPE.

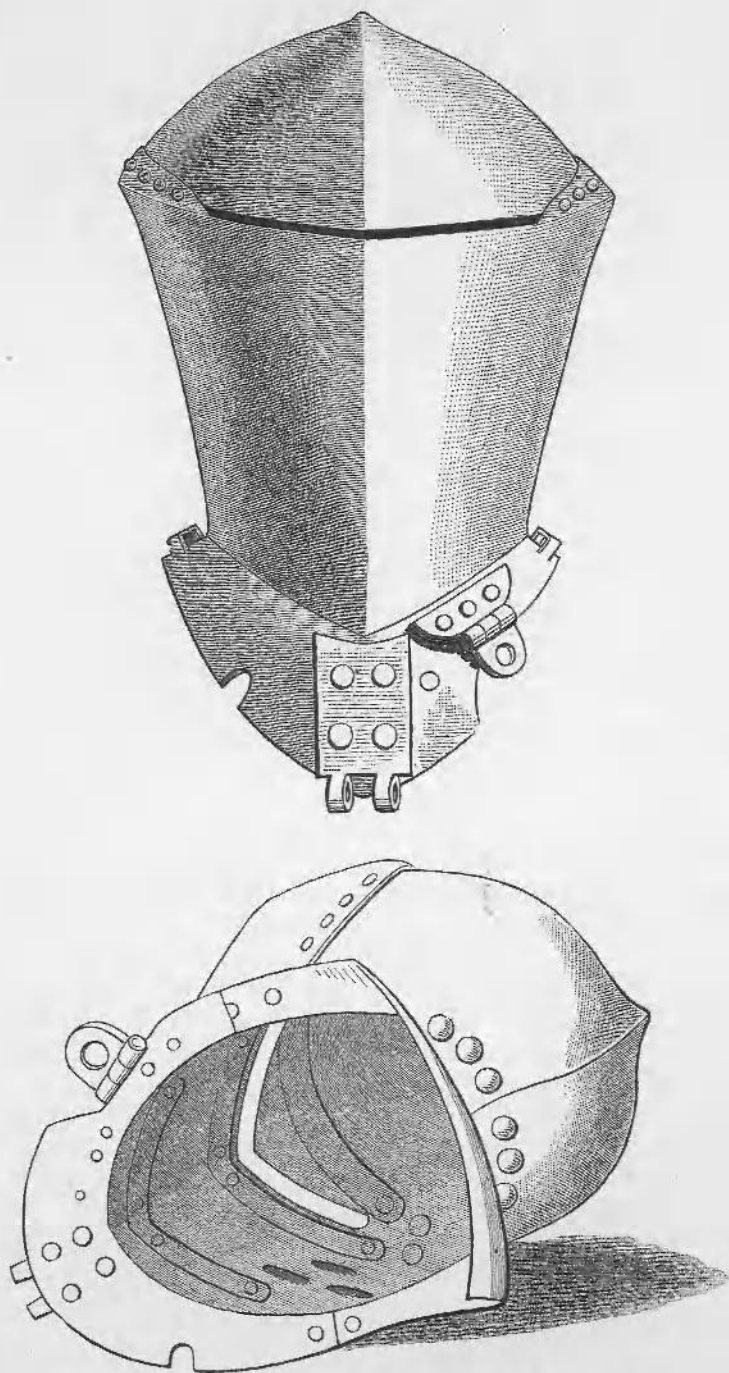
By JOHN HEWITT.

TILTING HELM FOUND IN THE TRIFORIUM OF WESTMINSTER
ABBEY.

THE fine example of a tilting helm here engraved was exhibited by the Dean of Westminster at the meeting of the Archæological Institute in February, 1869; having been recently found in a bay of the Triforium of Westminster Abbey. How long it had lain there, or whence it came, has not been ascertained. The date of the relic appears to be about 1500, a time commonly known as "the Maximilian period." The most striking feature of this helm is the arrangement for breathing, which consists of three large apertures on the right side, each an inch and a quarter across. On the left side, as usual in the tilting helm, there is no opening. In front are the remains of a hinge, to which was probably affixed a bar for locking to the breastplate, as seen in the example figured at p. 60 of the 21st vol. of this Journal. At the back is an iron loop for the passage of a strap, to attach that part to the backplate. On each side is a staple, to brace the helm to the shoulder. The outcut portion on the right probably admitted a boss of the breastplate. The purpose of the hinged eyelet on the left is not so easy to assign: it may have helped to carry the *manteau d'armes*. On the crown appear the holes for fixing the ornament of the helm, whatever that may have been. These ornaments, at the period in question, were various. Sometimes it was the crest with wreath¹ and mantling; sometimes an elaborate plume of feathers: in the tournament roll of Henry VIII. the kerchief of Pleasance is worn by several of the knights; and on another occasion, Hall tells

¹ The wreath of the helm on the Peché monument at Lullingstone, Kent, is formed of the leaves and fruit of the

peach, in allusion to the name of the knight. See Stothard's Monumental Effigies.



Tilting Helm found in Westminster Abbey. Date about A.D. 1500.



Le Heaulme du Roy. From the Tournament Roll of Henry VIII. in the Heralds' College.

us, "the Kyng had on his hed a Ladies Sleeve full of Diamondes." In Maximilian's Triumph some of the justers wear nothing but a circlet of laurel leaves, the so-called "crown of honour."

By traces of gold on the helm before us we are able to make out that a gilt border of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in depth adorned the upper edge of the front piece. Portions of the original lining are yet to be found. They are of leather, and the manner of fastening this lining is very clearly seen. Two iron bands, it will be observed, cross the inside of the face-guard, while a third appears just above the ocularium. It was by these that the lining was held in its place, each band being fixed to the body of the helm by rivets. The height of the casque, from the shoulder where the staple is, to the top, is about 13 in. : the weight is 17 lb. 12 oz.

The mounted figure with the crowned Helm is from the Tournament Roll of Henry VIII. preserved in the Heralds' College. It is entitled "*Le heaulme du Roy.*" The body of the casque is silvered : the ornaments represent pearls, rubies, sapphires, &c. Most of the body-armours of the knights justers are also silvered ; and this silvering does not appear to be merely a rich mode of indicating "white armour," for the engraved suit of Henry VIII. in the Tower has actually been plated throughout. The process was this: the whole surface was very finely hatched, then silver was beaten in, and the designs were made by the graver ploughing through the silver down to the steel beneath. The lines were probably filled with a dark paste. The esquire who carries the king's helm wears a rich collar, painted to imitate gems : the bridle and the poitrail are hung with bells : the ball on the crupper is a gold Pomegranate.

This fine roll has never been adequately engraved. There is a much-reduced print of it in the first volume of the *Vetusta Monumenta* ; one of the led horses, called "*Les Selles darmes,*" is given in Shaw's *Dress and Decorations* ; "*Les Roy desarmez*" (a civil costume) is figured in Dalloway's *Heraldic Inquiries* ; and two engravings of the king tilting and a group of eight "*Venantz*" appear in the third volume of *Ancient Armour and Weapons of Europe*.

Every one who has exhibited an old tilting helm has been met by two questions :—

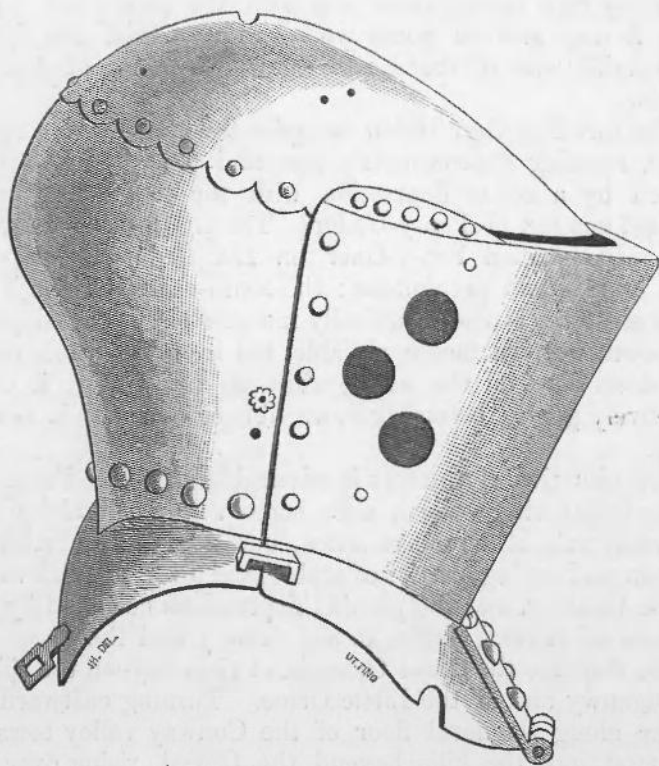
"You don't suppose they ever wore such things?"

“How could they see?”

Well, they *didn't* always see. On one occasion Henry VIII. (“Noble Cœur Loyal,” as he sarcastically calls himself in the Tourney Roll) had devised a new kind of justing suit, and the Duke of Suffolk was engaged to try a course with him to test its efficacy. The duke’s helm appears to have been like the one before us, and he had got his head so embarrassed within it that he was unable to see. At this juncture the king started for the onset, and, curiously enough, he forgot to close his visor, dashing forward with open face. Being told that the king was advancing, the duke couched his lance as best he might and spurred gallantly onward. Cries of affright were raised on all sides, but to no purpose in the clatter of horses and harness. Crash went the duke’s spear into the open visor, splinters flew in all directions, and renewed cries of horror were heard around. All thought the king was killed. But unluckily he wasn’t. The under-coif had received the blow and the monarch escaped.

Hall the chronicler, in his quaint and graphic way, thus tells the story:—“The x. day of Marche (1524) the kyng havyng a newe harnes made of his own devise and fashion, suche as no armorer before that tyme had seen, thought to assaye the same at the tylte, and appointed a justes to serve him. The kyng came to one end of the tylte and the Duke of Suffolke to the other. Then a gentleman sayd to the Duke, sir, the kyng is come to the tyltes ende. I see him not, sayd the Duke, on my fayth, for my headpiece taketh from me my sight. With these wordes the kyng had his spere delivred him, the viser of his headpece beyng up and not doune nor fastened, so that his face was clene naked. Then the gentleman sayd to the Duke, sir, the king commeth. Then the Duke set forward and charged his spere, and the kyng likewise unadvisedly set toward y^e duke. The people perceivying the kynges face bare, cryed hold, hold: the duke neither saw nor heard, and whether the kyng remembered that his viser was up or no, few could tell. Alas what sorrow was it to the people when they saw the spleters of the duke’s spere strike on the kynges hedpiece: For of a suretie the duke strake the kyng on the brow right under the defence of the hedpece on the very coiffe scull or basenetpece whereunto the barbett for power and defence is

charneld, to whiche coyffe or bassenet never armorer taketh hede, for it is evermore covered with the viser, barbet and volant pece, and so that pece is so defended that it forseth of no charge. But when y^e spere on that place lighted, it was great ieopardy of death, insomuch that the face was bare, for the dukes spere brake all to shyvers and bare the kynges viser or barbet so farre backe by the countre buffe that all the kynges headpece was full of spleters. The duke incontynently unarmed him and came to the kyng, shewyng him the closenes of his sight, and sware that he would never runne against the kyng more. But the kyng sayd that none was to blame but himself." (p. 674, ed. 1809.)



Tilting Helm found in Westminster Abbey. Date about A.D. 1500.