

NOTES ON A BRASS OF ROBERT DE HAITFELD AND ADA HIS WIFE, OWSTON CHURCH, YORKSHIRE.¹

By the Rev. C. R. MANNING.

This interesting little brass remains on the floor at the east end of the north aisle of Owston church, near Doncaster. The architecture of the church is of the Early Decorated style, with Early Perpendicular additions. The chancel has been beautifully restored by the Cooke family, to the memory of one of whom there is a monument by Chantrey. In the north wall of the chancel is a very fine canopy of stone foliations, under a triangular head. This, no doubt, covered a founder's tomb, and it has the peculiarity of being pierced through the wall close to the ground, so as to form an opening into a destroyed north chapel, with mouldings equally rich on both sides. A modern wall has been built up outside, leaving a space so as to preserve it, and a brass to the memory of Lady Helena Cooke inserted. The date of this tomb would be about 1270. Between the nave and chancel is a well-carved wooden screen, of about the date of 1500. The pillars of the nave on the north side are Early Decorated, except the easternmost one, which is loftier, and of about the year 1380 to 1400. At this point the aisle has been enlarged at the same date, no doubt for a chapel, and the windows in it are good Late Decorated or Early Perpendicular in style, with square heads. Robert de Haitfeld, whose brass I am noticing (which was put down at his wife's death in 1409, he being then surviving), desires in his will, made October 15th, 1417, and proved November 2nd following, to be buried in the chapel of S. Mary, in the church of All Saints at Owston, newly constructed. Hunter in his *History of the Deanery of Doncaster*, ii, 481, supposes that this was the destroyed chapel on the north side of the chancel; but there seems no reason to doubt that it was this one at the east end of the north aisle, where the brass still remains.

This brass has all the characteristics of its date, in the fineness of the lines, delicacy of execution, and well disposed drapery and position of the figures. The male figure is on the left of the female, and their right hands are clasped, in token of faithful love, as the inscription below expresses, "en droiturel amor foies." His head is bare, with his hair turned over the ears. He wears a coat with loose sleeves, escalloped at the wrist, tightly buttoned at the neck, slightly split up in front, and extending to the ancles. Round his neck is a collar of an order, probably of Esses, but the engraving is not very distinct. His dress is fastened at

¹ Read in the Historical Section at the Annual Meeting at Northampton, Aug. 5th, 1878.

the waist with a long girdle, the ornamented end of which he is holding up with the forefinger and thumb of his left hand, the other fingers being extended. At his left side hangs his dagger, or anelace, in an ornamented sheath. His boots are pointed, and his feet stand on a flowered ground.

His wife, Ada de Haitfeld, has her head covered with a veil, showing only a caul of hair on each side the forehead, with a band of jewels across. Round her neck is a similar collar to that of her husband. She wears the tight fitting dress of the time, covered to the ground with an ample flowing mantle. The sleeves are quite plain and extend to the fingers. Her left hand is on her bosom, the first and third fingers being bent, and the other two extended, the thumb being inserted in the fold of the dress, or holding the cord which unites the mantle across the breast.

The inscription at the foot of the figures is in old French, and has some peculiar expressions. Mr. Joseph Hunter, in his account already referred to, was not able to decipher all of it, and has left some blanks. A more accurate description is preserved in the valuable collection of MSS. of Yorkshire history in the library of F. Bacon Frank, Esq., of Campsall Hall, the adjoining parish. Hunter prints it so as to make the first four lines to rhyme. It will be seen that some of the expressions are very unusual, and may require amendment :—

“ Robert de Haitfeld gist ycy
et Ade sa feme ovesq3 [*avec*] lui,
en droiturel amo^r foies. Pleni
dieu de louir aumes eit mcy.

Et y fait a remembrer q la dite Ade finist p^rmer En mois de juin, le
tieres jo^r & en lan de n^re seign Mill^e CCCC & IX. Et finest aussi Ades
le dit Roberd enap's, En mois de . . . le . . . jo^r. Et
en lan de n^re siegn^r Mill^e CCCC &”

The word “finest” for “died” is, I think, very unusual. “Ada’s said Robert,” if that is the meaning, is also curious. “Enap’s” is *en apres*. It will be seen that the date of Haitfeld’s own death was never filled in. This very frequently happened; but Hunter has the following pertinent remarks on the subject :—“It is to be remembered that in those times it would not be easy to find in the country a person who was capable of executing the nice engraving which is found in our antient brasses, and that to complete the inscriptions would have required that the brasses should be separated from the paviour to which they had been firmly rivetted, and sent probably to a great distance.”