ANTIQUARIAN NOTES ON THE ROSE.[1]

By J. LEWIS ANDRE, F.S.A.

The Rose is described in English Dictionaries either as "a medicinal flower," "a very sweet flower," "a very fragrant flower," or, "a plant and flower of many species"—definitions which give but a faint and poor idea of that Queen of Flowers which has held such a prominent place in Art, Poetry, Legend, Religion, Heraldry, etc. The name is almost the same in many languages, and as formerly planets were supposed to exercise their influence over plants, as well as on men and metals, roses were reputed to be under their governance, the red beneath that of Jupiter, the damask under that of Venus, and the white owned obedience to the Moon. Also as all the animals before the fall of man were said to have been harmless, so were herbs held to have been without poison, and for this reason Milton tells us that in Eden there were

> "Flowers of all hue and without thorn the rose."
>
> *Paradise Lost*, Bk. IV, line 256.

Rutherford, a preacher of the same century in which Milton flourished, was also of opinion that the roses and lilies "no doubt had more sweetness of beauty and smell before the sin of man had made them vanity-sick."[2]

Considering the poetical character of so much of the Sacred Scriptures, it is remarkable that only one allusion to the rose is made in them, and this occurs in Isaiah, where the prophet says that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." It is true that in the Song of Solomon the second chapter begins with "I am the rose of Sharon," in the English version, but this can hardly be considered a satisfactory explanation of the text, as according to Dr. Littledale "it is rendered in the Syriac,

[1] Read at the monthly meeting of the Institute, June 5, 1895.

[2] Buckle's *Hist. of Civilisation*, vol. ii. p. 383.

LXX, and Vulgate, *flower of the plain*, and modern critics, for the most part, hold that the narcissus, not the rose, is the plant intended."[1]

Do we wish to know why some roses are red and others white? Sir John Mandeville can tell us, for speaking of Bethlehem, he says:—

"Between the Cytye and the church is the Felde Floridus, that is to seyne the feld flourished: For als much as a fayre maiden was blamed with wrong and schlandered . . . for which cause she was demed to the dethe and to be brent in that place to which sche was ladd, and as the fyre began to brenne about hire sche made hire prayers to oure Lord, that als wissely as sche was not gylty of that Synne, that he wolde help hire and make it knowen to alle menne of hys mercyfulle grace. And whan sche had thus seyd sche entered into the Fyre, and anon was the Fyer qwenched and owte, and the brondes that weren brennynge becomen rede Roseres and the Brondes that weren not kyndled becomen white Roseres fulle of Roses, and these were the first Roseres and Roses, bothe white and rede that evere ony man saughe. And thus was the maiden saved by the Grace of God. And therefore is that feld clept the feld of God floryscht for it was full of roses."[2]

The ancient Greeks were especially fond of the rose, and Anacreon in his Odes speaks of it in very laudatory terms. It is, he says, a transcendent flower, a delight even to the gods—the breath of gods—the enchantment of mortals, and the play-toy of Venus. Sappho, also, in her poems, expresses an equal fondness for the rose. With the Greeks, Archbishop Potter says, "it was the emblem of silence, when to present it, or hold it up to any person in discourse, served instead of an admonition that it was time for him to hold his peace; and in entertaining rooms," he continues, "it was customary to place a rose above the table to signify that what was there spoken should be kept private."[3] This custom appears to have been preserved down to recent times, and in countries far away from Greece, for Peacham in his

[1] *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, p. 56.

[2] Mandeville, ch. vi., ed. Halliwell.

[3] *Antiquities of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 385.

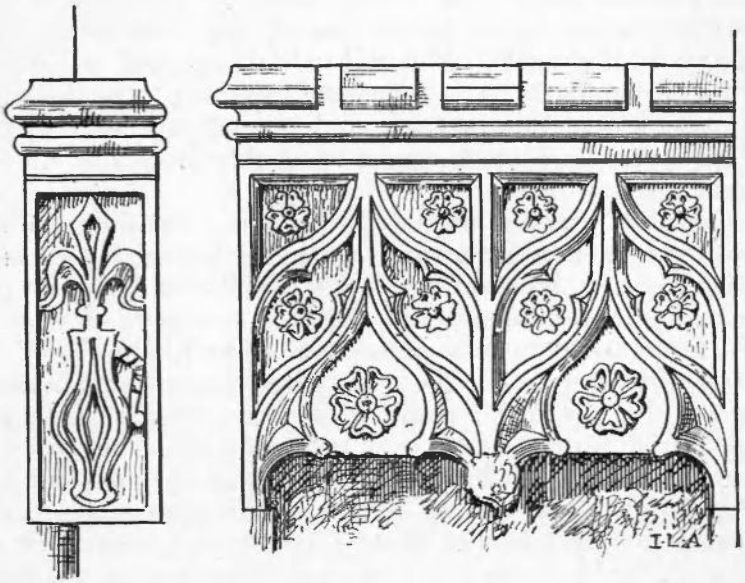
Truth of our Times, published in 1638, writes that "in many places, as well in England, as in the Low-Countries, they have over their tables the rose painted, and what is spoken under the rose must not be revealed";[1] and Aubrey, a little later than Peacham, also alludes to this custom in his *Remains of Gentilism and Judaism*, "Nazianzen," he says, "makes the rose the symbol of silence, and the ancient custome in Symposical meetings was to weave chaplets of roses about their heads; and so we condemne not the Garman custome which over the table describeth a rose in the ceiling."[2] Perhaps it is worth mention here that a rose of large size forms the centre of the mediæval round table preserved at Winchester, popularly but erroneously supposed to be the one around which King Arthur and his knights assembled. The saying "under the rose," probably originated from the above custom.

Another practice of the Greeks has come down to us with greater certainty, namely, that of bedecking graves with roses. Anacreon says that this flower drives away maladies and prolongs life, that the graves of the dead are protected by it as by an amulet.[3] Brand, in his *Popular Antiquities*, quotes Malkin to the effect that in South Wales it was the custom to plant white roses on the graves of unmarried women, and red on those of good or benevolent persons.[4] About fifty years ago it was very unusual to find flowers of any kind planted on English graves, and therefore Allen in his *History of Surrey* records as a remarkable fact that at Ockley in that county "it was formerly the custom" . . . "that if either of two contracted parties died before marriage, the survivor planted roses at the head of the grave of the deceased."[5] Garlands of white paper roses were, it is well known, hung up in Derbyshire churches and elsewhere, over the seats of persons who had died in early youth or unmarried, and the custom existed till quite recent times. In connection with the Greek use of roses on graves, it may be mentioned that the modern Copts in their ritual represent

[1] p. 173, Brand, vol. ii. p. 347.
[2] *Remains, &c.*, p. 110, ed. *Folk Lore Society*.
[3] See Potter's *Antiquities of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 233.
[4] Brand, vol. ii. p. 310.
[5] Vol. ii. p. 209.

the burial of our Lord on Good Friday, by placing the altar cross on a bed of roses, in a recess east of the altar.[1]

The modern Greeks appear to have preserved the idea of the rose having the properties of an amulet, for a writer in the *Fortnightly Review* tells us that on September 11th of each year, two roses are taken by the peasants near Mount Olympus, and these, after having been blessed, are "broken up and scattered about the first field which is sown that year, as a sure emblem of



COWFOLD, SUSSEX.

abundance and success."[2] In Russia a charm still used by the peasantry has reference to a story to the effect that our Lord passing over a field with roses in his hands, the flowers mysteriously disappeared.[3]

In the middle ages the white rose was considered the emblem of virgins and confessors, and the red of martyrs. Ælfric, an Anglo-Saxon bishop, in a somewhat similar fashion tells us that God's church in peace has lilies, that is a pure life-course, in strife roses, that is martyrdom.

[1] See *Art Journal*, 1885, p. 151.

[2] *Greek Peasant Life*, in *Fortnightly Review*, Aug. 1886, p. 222.

[3] See *Folk Lore*, vol. vi. p. 89.

The rose in Christian art and legend holds its chief place in connection with the Blessed Virgin, as it has been universally associated with her, and deemed her especial flower. At Cowfold, Sussex, portions of the reredos or canopy still remaining over the lady altar are adorned with the lily-pot on the one side, whilst two traceried arches in front are decorated with roses freely introduced. Another example is furnished by some stained glass in Brown's Bede-House at Stamford, where St. Mary is seen with her head surrounded by a rose-bedecked nimbus, whilst she holds a lily branch with three flowers in one hand, and a branch with three roses, in the other. Again, at Fovant, Wiltshire, there is a brass dated 1492, having on it a representation of the Annunciation the background of which is covered with roses. Another brass dated 1460, formerly in Westminster Abbey, had in its canopy a rose of five leaves with the letters M.A.R.I.A. inscribed, one on each petal, the monogram of our Lord forming the centre, whilst surrounding the whole was the couplet

Sis rosa flos florum
Morbis medicina reorum.

Sometimes half a rose was joined to the letter M, as on the inscription on the brass to Sir George Felbrigg, formerly at St. Mary's, Playford, Suffolk, where the device is placed between each of the words. As an emblem of the Blessed Virgin the rose is seen on the brass of John Byrkhed, 1418, at Harrow, Middlesex, where it is on the morse of the cope, surrounded by a rayed glory. A similar rose in glory may be seen on the brass to Robert Langton, *circa* 1520, at Queen's College, Oxford.

Apart from any reference to St. Mary several other brasses had the rose prominently introduced; one of these at St. Peter's, St. Albans, had a rose of four petals, so arranged as to form a cruciform design; within a central circle was the word Ecce, and on the leaves qđ expẽdi habui, qđ donaui habeo, qđ negaui punior, qđ suaui pdidi, and around was an English rendering of this inscription. Although no longer in its original position, this device is believed to be preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. An almost identical example is said to be now in the chapel of Ashridge House, Hertfordshire, it is engraved

LITTLETON, MIDDLESEX,
Half Linear.

in Haines.[1] Two roses bearing the words Ihū- mercy, form part of a brass at Littleton, Middlesex, *circa* 1450, but the arms and inscription, now on the same slab, do not belong to this memorial. At Ely Cathedral, the brass to Bishop Thomas Goodryke 1554, has the evangelistic symbols within roses. Haines mentions a brass at Ashford, Kent, *circa* 1490, on which is engraved "an angel holding an inscription encircled by a wreath of roses."[2]

To return to the rose in association with the Blessed Virgin, we sometimes find her image surrounded by roses,

ELY CATHEDRAL.
Half Linear.

as in a picture by Seghers now in the collection at Hampton Court. At other times she is seen standing in a garden of roses, examples occur in German and Italian art. When the cross and the rose are seen together in art, they doubtless have reference to our Lord and his Mother. A remarkable instance of this is furnished by the corporation seal of Carlisle which has on one side the figure of St. Mary with the usual legend Ave Maria, etc.,

[1] *Haines*, vol. i. p. cx.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. cxi.

encircling it, and on the reverse a cross between four roses with a fifth at the intersection of the limbs.[1]

A favourite idea with mediæval writers compared Mary to a rose blossoming on the thorny stem of Judea: it occurs in a poem by Sedulius,[2] and in a sermon by St. Peter Damian, whilst it formed part of an anthem sung daily by the knights of the French Order of the Star, founded in 1351, by King John II. A somewhat similar conceit is in the sequence for the Feast of the Assumption in the Sarum missal—

> "From our first mother Eve's sickly branch,
> Mary the blossoming rose proceeded forth."[3]

Several old English bells are inscribed—

"Sum rosa pulsata mundi Maria vocata."

Examples are met with at Dickleborough, Norfolk, and Titsey, Surrey. A variation of it is seen at Catsfield, Sussex, where there is a bell inscribed—

"Sum Rosa Pulsata Mundi Katerina Vocata."

The devotion called the Rosary, or occasionally the Psalter of the Blessed Virgin, is said to be offered to St. Mary as a crown of roses. This is emblematically represented in some stained glass at Raby Castle, where a circle of beads is seen divided by five roses, each flower enclosing one of the emblems of the five wounds; surrounding the whole is the following inscription.—

Aue . pissima . virgo . maria . q' . es . rubens . rosa . et super omnem creatura indumeto . divini . amoris . induta.

The Dominican order is closely connected with the devotion of the rosary, on its feast which occurs early in October, roses blessed in the churches of the friars are distributed to the people. Roger de la Zouche granted certain lands by the tenure of providing a chaplet of roses for the image of St. John the Baptist at Tong, Salop, or in

[1] One of the bosses in the nave roof of the church of St. Mary Overie, Southwark, bore a cross between four roses.

[2] "As from the sharp thorns springs the gentle rose,
Stingless, and hides its mother with its bloom;
So Blessed Mary, come of Eve's stem,
A new maid, purged that elder maiden's sin.
Thorns bear the rose, Judea Mary bore."
Dr. Littledale trans. Song of Songs, p. 65.

[3] English Translation of Sarum Missal, p. 426, Ch. Press Co.

certain circumstances the garland was to be placed on the figure of St. Mary.

A large number of legends have clustered round St. Mary in connection with roses. The best known of these is one which states that on her grave being opened, it was found empty, save for a lining of roses. Many pictures of the early masters represent this legend. Raphael illustrates it in a work now in the Vatican, and Annibal Carracci in a picture, about 1600 in date, shows the apostles round the sepulchre, one of whom in astonishment lifts a handful of roses therefrom. Rubens, picturing this scene, shows a woman with her apron filled with the same flowers.[1]

Besides the Blessed Virgin other saints are connected with the rose. St. Anne, like her daugher, is compared to one in the Sarum Missal, being thus addressed in the sequence for her feast :—

> "O rose right fair of beauteous air!
> With whom the lilies blend."[2]

Passing onwards to the lesser saints we find St. Angelus represented with roses falling from his mouth, SS. Ascylus and Victoria carrying wreaths, and St. Casilda crowned with white roses. St. Dorothea is either wreathed with this flower or carries three roses and three apples in a basket. St. Elizabeth of Hungary holds roses in her arms or apron. A figure of St. Elizabeth of Portugal in Westminster Abbey bears a basket of roses, and the flower is naturally the emblem of St. Rose of Lima, and St. Rose of Viterbo. The legend of St. Cecilia and her rose garland forms the subject of one of the best of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The latest legend with which I am acquainted concerning the rose, dates no further back than 1881, and is connected with an incident said to have occurred at St. Wilfrid's Church at Hayward's Heath.

The Assyrian priests were occasionally crowned with roses, as were also those of mediæval Christendom. Such garlands are mentioned in the parish accounts of St. Mary-

[1] The rose plays a conspicuous part in the legend of Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose picture is largely venerated in Mexico: it is prominent also in the story of Our Lady and St. Rosalia.

[2] English Translation, p. 406.

at-Hill, and St. Martin Outwich, London, in the early part of the sixteenth century, whilst a seventeenth century print represents the corporation of the Goldsmiths of Paris carrying their *chasse* with the relics of their patroness St. Genevieve, each member of that illustrious body being pourtrayed as crowned with a rose garland.[1] Roses in some orders also crown the nun about to make her profession.

It is hardly necessary to allude to the prominent part which roses took in mediæval decorative art. Perhaps one of the most remarkable examples of its employment in this manner is furnished by the tower of The Rose at Windsor Castle, which we know from documents preserved in the Record Office, was painted externally with roses during the reign of Edward III. A painter named William Burdon was employed more than 120 days on this work, being assisted by several inferior hands working under his supervision.

The emblem of the rose was common on ecclesiastical furniture and vestments, thus at Abinger, Surrey, the return made in the reign of Edward VI. mentions "a wodden cros platted with silver gilted, with roses and braunches poiz by estymacion xvi oz.," and at Bermondsey at the same period there was "an olde cope of red sylke with roses of silver and gilte."[2] The brass of John Mapilton, 1432, at Broadwater, Sussex, shows the orphrey embroidered with roses. Spenser in his *Shepherd's Complaint* alludes to the decking of the pillars of churches with roses.

In Heraldry the rose is conspicuous and Gwillim writes thus concerning the meaning of its use: "The portraiture or resemblance of a rose," he says "may signify unto us some kind of good environed or to be set on all sides with evils, as that is with prickels which may give us notice how our pleasures and delights are beset with bitternesse and sharpnesse," and he follows this remark with many more in the same strain.[3] The figure of this flower is an early charge, the cinquefoil and sexfoil seem to have been originally used

[1] Engraved in *Lacroix Arts of the Middle Ages*, p. 162.

[2] *Surrey Archæological Collections*, vol. iv. pp. 13, 99.

[3] *Display of Heraldrie*, p. 147.

to express it. In heraldry the red rose is said to be the emblem of beauty and grace, the white, of love and purity. The rose forms a prominent feature in some hundreds of coats of arms, as in those of the families of Beverley, Billinger, Boscawen, Higginbottom, etc., where it is the sole charge. Where the arms consist of a cross and roses, as in those of Manning and Barnsley, there can be little doubt that these charges are borne in remembrance of our Lord and St. Mary; also, when roses and fleurs-de-lis, or lilies, are the bearings, as in the arms of Couppe, the reference to the Blessed Virgin is very evident.[1]

The use of the rose as a royal device or badge, appears to have been first introduced by Eleanor of Provence, the Queen of Henry III., and each sovereign from Edward IV., down to, and including Queen Anne, used a variation of the rose. Henry VIII. assumed the combined red and white roses, with the motto *Rosa sine spina*, one which occurs on the farthings of Henry IV., and on coins of Henry VI. The use of this motto by Henry VIII. can scarcely be said to have been an appropriate one in his case, but his rose badge appears to have been a great favourite with his subjects and in the Tournament Roll of this period it is said:—

> "Oure ryall rose now reignyng rede and white,
> Sure grafted is on ground of noblynes,
> In Henry the VIII. our joye and our delyte."

A ballad composed in 1513, when the king invaded France, implores the Saviour, St. Mary, and St. George, to make the red rose bloom and flourish over all the coasts of that country. One verse given by M. du Boys runs as follows:—

> "The rose will into Fraunce spring,
> Almighty God hym thyther bring;
> And save this flower which is our King,
> This rose, this rose, thys Royal Rosse."

To the edition of *Fabyan's Chronicles* published in 1516, was a kind of title-page on which appeared the Royal Arms, having over them a rose supported by angels, one of whom bears a scroll with Hec rosa Virtutis de Celo missa

[1] The family of Quennell or Quynell; of Compton, Surrey, have for arms, *Azure, a cross between two roses in chief or, and as many fleurs-de-lis in base argent.*

sereno, and the other one inscribed Eternum florens regia sceptra feret. A book of *Cicero's Orations* dated 1509, belonging to Henry VIII., and bound by Julian Notary bears a similar device. The "Rose, Angel, and Crown," is still an inn sign at Tunbridge, Kent, and the numerous signs of the "Rose and Crown," show the great popularity of the Tudor emblem.

Yeomen of the Crown, or Crown-keepers wore a rose and crown on the left shoulder, one or two examples are met with on brasses; the crown is combined with the rose in an unusual manner on the memorial of Thomas Noke, 1567, at Shottesbrooke, Berks, the rose being placed inside. The same badge was worn by the Yeomen of the Guard, a good example of which is seen on the brass of William Payn, 1568, at East Wickham, Kent.

Elizabeth with the badge of the rose retained the motto *Rosa sine spina*, which was also used by Charles I. on one of his coins—the half groat. She also used another motto of her father's, *Rutilans rosa sine spina*. The late Llewellynn Jewitt, in an excellent paper in the *Reliquary* of 1884, says that "on some of the Irish coins of James I. is the motto, *Henricus rosas, regna Jacobus*, or Henry united the roses, James, the kingdoms." The "Rose and Thistle," the badge of James, I. occurs as an inn sign at Camberwell, Farnham, and Frimley, all in Surrey.

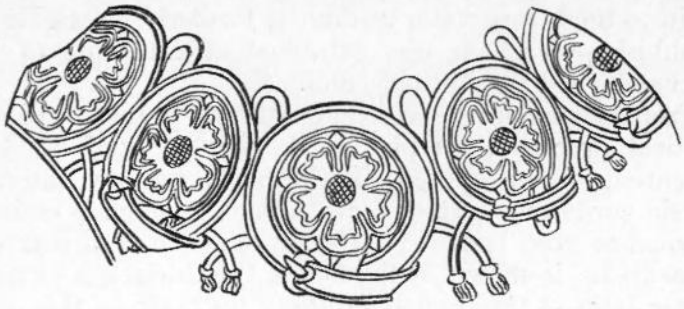
The white rose, originally the Yorkist badge, became that of the Jacobite party, and even after the final collapse of the efforts to restore the Stuarts it continued to be used. In 1754, Mr. Freeman tells us that at Exeter, Jacobitism showed itself more openly than it had done when swords were drawn in the land, for "on the 7th of June, the Pretender's birthday, white roses were openly worn, and the sign of an inn was adorned with them."[1]

Garlands of roses form an heraldic charge. Bossewell, writing in the time of Elizabeth, says that as the rose is the chief flower, so the head of man being his chief part, is often crowned with roses.

The collar of the Order of the Garter is now of gold, composed of twenty-six pieces encircled with the motto of the order, in the centre of each is a rose, enamelled

[1] *Freeman's Exeter*, p. 222.

red, seeded gold, and leaved green. Twenty six knots of gold fasten the circles together. A good example of this collar is seen on the brass of Sir Thomas Bullen, 1538, at Hever, Kent, but the motto of the order occurs in this instance only on the badge and the garter itself.[1]



COLLAR OF THE ORDER OF THE GARTER FROM THE BRASS TO SIR THOMAS BULLEN, 1538.
About one-third Linear.

The Golden Rose is, I believe, at the present day only sent to members of royal houses but was not entirely confined to royalty in former times; there is an account extant of the flower having been conferred on Sir Reginald de Mohun, a valiant Englishman, in the thirteenth century.[2] When Cæsar Borgia entered Rome in 1500, Alexander VI. presented the Golden Rose to him as a reward for his achievements, whilst in 1557 the presentation was made to the duchess of the sanguinary Duke of Alva.

The use of roses at Greek and Roman banquets is well known, and in England this flower appears to have been employed on similar occasions to loop up the tablecloth, as was shown in a painting of the Last Supper, formerly on the west wall of Horsham church, Sussex. The custom of looping the folds of the tablecloth with flowers is still practised in Germany, at christenings, marriages, and other family festivities.

In the East the use of rose-water is supposed to exercise a purifying influence. Roger of Wendover mentions

[1] My thanks are due to Mr. R. Garraway Rice, F.S.A., for the rubbing of the collar of the Order of the Garter from the brass to Sir Thomas Bullen.

[2] See *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxxvii. p. 67.

that when Saladin took Jerusalem in 1186, he caused the temple to be "sprinkled within and without with rose-water."[1] In the seventeenth century amongst the Armenians it was customary at the end of the marriage ceremonies to cast rose-water upon the newly married couple, and on those present in the church. A silver basin to hold rose-water at dinner, formerly belonging to Archbishop Warham, was exhibited at a meeting of the Archæological Institute in 1860.

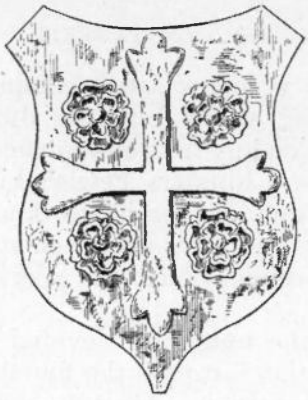
Preparations of the rose entered largely into mediæval medical practice; the plan of the monastery of St. Gall, executed, it is supposed, in the ninth century, shows a physic garden with sixteen beds, one of which is entirely devoted to rose bushes.[2] The prominence of this flower in medicine, is shown by the fact of the thirteenth century writer John of Gaddesden entitling his book on this subject *The Medical Rose.* The accounts for curatives supplied to Edward I. in 1306, show that "rose-water of Damascus" cost the King in that year £4. Sugar of roses was an item furnished to John, King of France, during his captivity in England, and John Russel's *Boke of Nurture*, says that a great lord should be sprinkled with rose water after a medicinal bath, a proceeding which may have been derived from the ancient Greek custom, mentioned by Homer, of anointing the body after bathing with oil mixed with roses. John Swan in his *Speculum Mundi*, published in 1643, describes a conserve of roses which he says is good "not onely to cool but also to comfort the principal parts of the bodie," and he gives full directions for its concoction, concluding with the statement that it will keep good "for a yeare or two but then it decayeth."[3] Chambers in 1751, mentions Acetum Rosatum, or vinegar of roses, which he says is chiefly used by way of embrocation on the head and temples in the "head-ache." He also speaks of a "syrup of pale roses." Among the numerous shrubs, flowers, and roots employed in French medicine during the last century, the rose was conspicuous. In the *Dictionnaire Portatif de Santé*, published at Paris in 1783, we meet with red roses boiled either in

[1] *Flowers of History*, vol. ii. p. 62, ed. Bohn, 1849.

[2] See plan in *Archæological Journal*, vol. v. p. 110.

[3] (p. xviii), p. 268.

water or vinegar, pounded red roses, conserve, oil, honey and ointment of these flowers, also syrups both of pale and dry roses. The Persians still use the leaves of the rose as a cure for melancholy.



ARMS OF MANNING, FROM A SLAB AT COATES, SUSSEX, 1700.
One-quarter Linear.