



THE CHESTERFIELD ARMOUR.

THE CHESTERFIELD ARMOUR IN THE METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK.

By the VISCOUNT DILLON, M.A. D.C.L. F.S.A.

In March, 1911, appeared in *Country Life* a short note on armour made by Jacob Topf, at that date rather prominently before the public. The armour then noticed consisted of portions of two suits made respectively for lord Compton and Mr. Skidmur or Scudamore. These portions of suits were in a very bad condition owing to rust and other causes, and there were not enough pieces of either suit to fit them for exhibition. The public idea of a suit is enough pieces to cover a man from head to foot, but the real idea of a suit of armour would mean many more pieces than that. A suit would consist of pieces which would cover and protect a man in the various kinds of combats which took place in the lists, for mounted exercises, and for fights on foot under various conditions; all these in addition to those portions necessary for actual fighting in war. These portions of two distinct suits passed, like so many other interesting objects, to the other side of the Atlantic, and have lately appeared in the Metropolitan Museum of Art at New York, but, ah! how changed. Probably the authorities know their public and feel that they would not care for scraps, so the restorer has been at work and a figure has been produced which will no doubt satisfy the non-critical visitor to the Metropolitan Museum. It may be a prejudice, but here in England we prefer to see objects of antiquity as they have come down to us, and no one has been bold enough to restore the Elgin marbles and such-like.

In the *Bulletin* of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, vol. VIII, no. 6, is an illustration giving front and back views of the 'Armor of Sir James Scudamore as at present exhibited.' This with other illustrations referring to the 'armor' is accompanied by an interesting note over the initials B. D. The bulletin, while mentioning that missing plates were added, notes also that 'the date of the restoration and the signature of the maker' have been engraved

on these modern additions, and 'will also be noted in the descriptive label.' So far so good, but not good at all. It is also stated that 'for temporary exhibition parts of the two suits have been associated.'

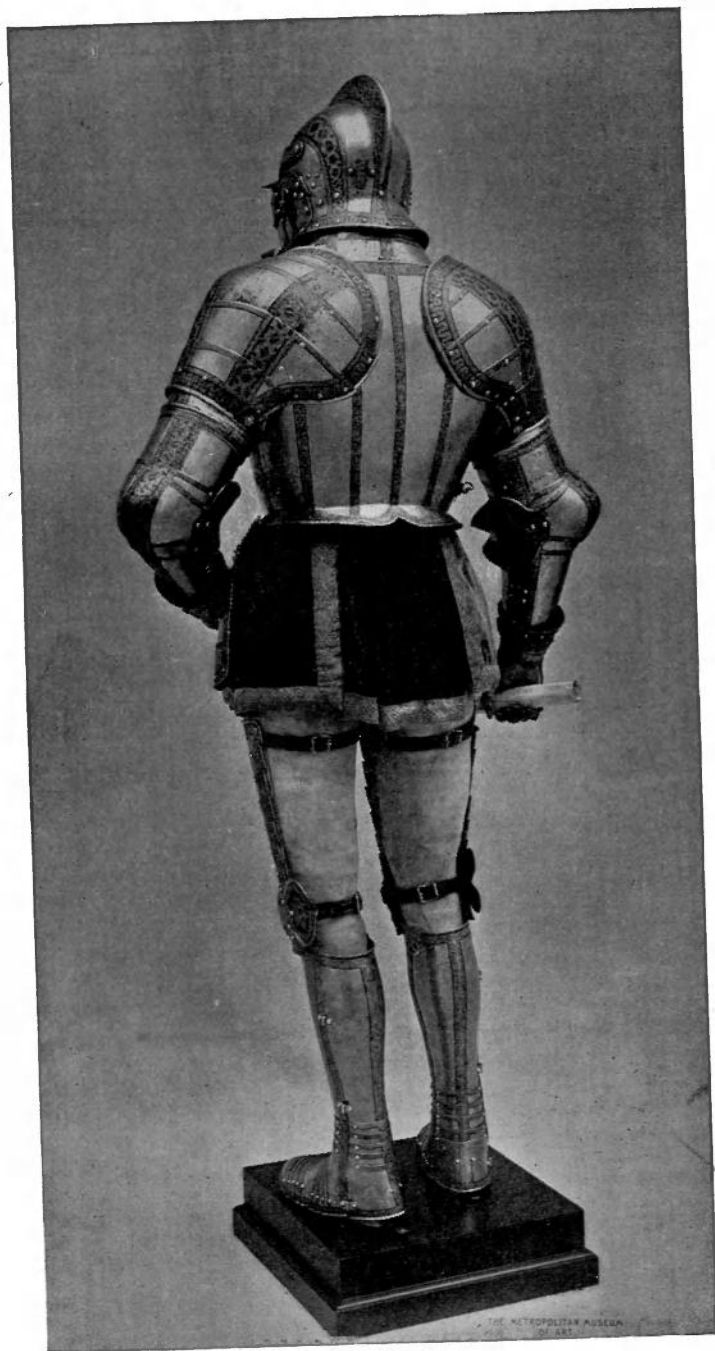
Now if a figure were exhibited, carefully labelled, in which George Washington's hat, Benjamin Franklin's breeches and Arnold's coat, were *associated*, would an American public be satisfied? and yet such a figure would not be more absurd than this armour of Sir James Scudamore.

B. D. suggests that 'as a result of grafting several generations of armorers of various nationalities, mainly German, upon an English stock, there had been produced a school of English armorers in the royal armor-ateliers.' From 1514 to 1575 there was hardly room for *several generations*, nor have we any evidence from the existence of other suits in England similar in excellence to Topf's work. Pickering, who made the fine suit of Henry prince of Wales, now at Windsor, does not belong to Topf's period, though no doubt in later years he did imitate the German's work fairly successfully. As to the non-appearance of the brayette in Elizabethan armour, what *was* said was, that in portraits of that period, painted in England, such an article of dress never appears.

B. D.'s idea about 'a certain heaviness in form, large-jointed and loose-fitting, all in the substantial honest comfortable work which marks the English artist-artizan' is certainly peculiar, and it would be interesting to know on what it is founded.

To conclude, we may just note how Sir James Scudamore is built up and *associated*, considering the old materials at hand.

The burgonet belongs to the Compton suit; the breast and back belong to the Scudamore suit; the right and left arms (much repaired) to the Compton suit; the gauntlets and one of the taces are new. The cuisses and knee-pieces belong to the Compton suit with one new plate; the right jamb and the left jamb front belong to the Scudamore suit; the back part of the latter is new; the solerets, both much repaired, belong to the Scudamore suit.



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