Sussex Archæological Society.

FEMALE HEAD-DRESSES.

EXEMPLIFIED BY SUSSEX BRASSES.

By J. LEWIS ANDRÉ, F.S.A.

Among the many valuable features possessed by monumental brasses one of the most prominent is the unbroken record which they present of the fashions in dress which prevailed from the beginning of the fourteenth century until nearly the close of the seventeenth, and amongst these the changes displayed in the female head-dress are perhaps the most interesting, for naturally the fair sex has expended the utmost care in setting off to the best advantage that part of the person in which beauty is most prominent, and for this reason, in all ages and amongst all peoples, female head attire has received ample attention. England has not been behind other nations in this respect, and the simple brass plates found in our Sussex churches form an enduring testimony of the care bestowed on this matter by the Englishwomen of former times.

Probably in no case does the proverb that "history repeats itself" apply better than to female head-dresses, for nearly every feature in a mediæval coiffure has found its counterpart in our own, or recent times, and a slight study of this subject reveals several interesting facts corroborative of this assertion. In the first place the women of the middle ages appear to have worn an amount of head-gear quite unlike their successors of the present day, and this amplitude of head-covering was equalled

by its weight, for does not Chaucer tell us of his wife of Bath, that

> Hire coverchiefs weren ful fine of ground;
> I dorste swere, they weyeden a pound.

But it must be remembered that scarcely a hundred years ago ponderous erections crowned the heads of the ladies of the Georgian period, rivalling in monstrosity any of the head-dresses of the fifteenth century.[1] The hair of the mediæval belle too was often made to appear more ample than nature had accorded, and by the aid of tow and other materials the scanty locks were swelled out, just as within memory similar pads, or "frizzees," as they were termed, puffed out the pomatum greased tresses of the fair in the early days of Victoria. Again, the desire of adding to one's stature, so frequently to be noticed in mediæval head-dresses, has its counterpart at the present moment in the lofty hats of our ladies, whilst the custom of drawing back the hair off the forehead, so prevalent in the middle ages, was for a short time in vogue during the present century when the so-called "scratch back" treatment was in fashion. Lastly, it is curious to observe that the predilection of the mediæval ladies for long, pendant "coverchiefs" is again reproduced in the veils worn by hospital nurses and affected by our maidservants.

One kind of mediæval head-gear has perhaps disappeared for ever, that worn by widows, and of which many examples appear on brasses, though I have met with none in Sussex. Its chief features consisted in the barbe, gorget, or whimple, and the veil. The former was often stiffly plaited and seems to have sometimes covered the head beneath the veil, as on a brass, *circa* 1440, at Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey. These articles of apparel made the widow appear like a modern nun, and, indeed, the mediæval widow was often closely allied to the conventual state, and bound by vow not to re-marry, though holding property and living in the world. We have an example of one of these "vowesses," as they were termed,

[1] The ridiculous head-dresses of the eighteenth century are well illustrated in an article on "The Follies of Fashion" in the "Pall Mall Magazine" for Sept., 1893, pp. 683-694.

in the person of "Domina Alicia Seynte Johan, domina de Bagenet," who made her profession 9th of April, 1398, in the chapel of the Lord of Amberley, Sussex.[2]

In the middle ages the word attire signified the dress of the head alone, as is indicated in the will of Richard, Earl of Arundel, dated 4th March, 1392, in which he says he leaves "to my said wife (Philippa) the apparel for the heads of ladies, as well of pearls as of other *attire* which I gave my said dear wife in my life, so long as she lives, and after her decease I will that the said *attire* be immediately divided between my sons Richard and Thomas, because it appears likely that they will marry." Still more express is the following extract from a letter written in 1448 by Margaret Paston, who, writing about the "wedding trousseau" of a bride, says that "there is purvayd for her moche gode aray of gowyns (gowns) gyrdelys and *atyrys* and moch other gode aray."[3] In Heraldry the word is applied to the horns of a stag, and Guillim informs us that "Some authors are of opinion that the *attires* of Gentlewomen's Heads were first found out and devised by occasion of the sight of the horns of this beast, because they are seemly to behold, and doe become the beast right well."[4] But the modern signification of the word *attire* as denoting dress in general is at least as old as the days of Shakespeare, who uses it in this sense.

Sussex has the good fortune to possess at Trotton the earliest known brass effigy of a lady now remaining in England. It is a fine example of early fourteenth century date and the figure commemorates Lady Margaret Camoys, who died in 1310. The hair has an ornamental band between it and the forehead, and is gathered into knots at the sides; the neck and cheeks are enveloped in a gorget or whimple, over which is thrown a veil or peplum, which falls over the shoulders, and is kept in its

[2] See "Widows and Vowesses," in the "Archæological Journal," Vol. XLIX., p. 79, and "Sussex Archæological Collections," Vol. III., pp. 210-211.

[3] "Testamenta Vetusta," p. 131.

[4] "Display of Heraldrie," p. 183, ed. 1638. A passage in the Old Testament (*Leviticus* xiv. 4) indicates the same meaning of the word: "With the linen mitre shall he be *attired*."

place by two pins, a feature which is shown more clearly on a fourteenth century effigy at Wickhampton, Norfolk, but is here indicated by two dots only. The whimple was sometimes dyed by saffron, and in later times, as before observed, became confined to nuns and widows. The figure of Lady Camoys resembles greatly that of

MARGARITE de CAMOYS.

TROTTON, cā. 1310.

Aveline, Countess of Lancaster, on her monument at Westminster Abbey, and dated 1269, just forty-one years earlier than this brass at Trotton.[5]

About 1380 is the date of the brass commemorating Agnes, wife of John Kyggesfolde, at Rusper. Here the demi-figure of the lady has the head simply enveloped in a veil, and no hair whatever is visible. Probably this simple head-dress was that worn by persons of ordinary rank, a close cap being worn under the coverchief.

[5] This figure is engraved in Stothard's "Monumental Effigies," Plate XL. At page 70 of this work it is said that white was the original colour of the whimple. The hair was sometimes shown at the sides of the face plaited, as at Ingham, on the brass of Lady Stapleton, dated 1364, but, unfortunately, now lost.

AGNES DE KEGGESFOLDE.
RUSPER, ca. 1380.

LADY DALLINGRIDGE.
FLETCHING ca 1395.

A very different coiffure is exhibited on the figure of Lady Dalyngrugge, at Fletching, and which is about 1395. In it we have an example of the nebule head-dress, which, in its early form, encircled the head and cheeks, the hair being enclosed in a thin net, represented by a series of wavy or nebule lines varying in number; here there are three, and the ends of the tresses falling on the shoulders are caught up in similar network.

About the close of this century may be dated the brass of a civilian and his wife at Ore, in the now disused church. The figure of the lady in this case shows the nebule head-dress confined to the top of the head, whilst the hair flowing down on to the shoulders is caught up into small balls enclosed in nets.[6]

Totally different to any of the foregoing is the head-gear shown on the effigy of Lady Elizabeth Camoys, at Trotton, and 1424 in date. Here we are introduced to the primitive form of the celebrated horned head-dress, in which the hair is entirely hidden and gathered into a caul on each side of the face; this was named a *crespine*, or *crestine*, and which Fairholt tells us "still exists in name and fact in Italy."[7] At first these cauls stood out straight from the head as here, and as shown on brasses about 1415 at Boughton, Oxon, and East Markham, Notts. Over the crespines is a veil falling down the back, and not resting on the shoulders, whilst the regular way in which the lines occur on the front of the coverchief would seem to indicate that it was crimped. The cauls were framed with brass wire and formed of rich materials, with bands composing a network, often with pearls at their intersections, as shown on a painting by Van Eyck, engraved by Seré.[8] Sometimes the veil did not cover the crespines, but simply fell down the back, as on the brass of Margaret Felbrigge, 1416, at Felbrigg, Norfolk. Juvenal des Ursins, describing the habits of the French ladies of the early part of the fifteenth century, says

[6] Nets of gold thread sometimes enclosed the hair both of Greek and Roman ladies. See Guhl and Konor, "The Life of the Greeks and Romans," p. 491.

[7] "Costume in England," Vol. II., p. 137, ed. Bell, 1896.

[8] "Moyen Age," Plate XV.

A LADY
ORE, ca 1400.

ELIZABETH CAMOYS.
TROTTON, 1419.

that they wore "horns wonderfully high and large, having on each side, instead of pads, ears so large that when they would pass through the door of a room it was necessary for them to turn aside and stoop," and it "was judged necessary to enlarge the doors of the apartments at the Chateau de Vincinnes" to allow of the fair wearers' free passage.[9]

At West Grinstead we have two brasses of ladies, one a memorial of Philippa, wife of Hugh Halsham, Esq., dated 1395, but executed about 1440, and the other a

JOYCE HALSHAM.
W. GRINSTEAD, 1441

PETRONILLA BERTLOT,
STOPHAM. 1490.

work of the same date. In each of these we have the horned head-dress fully developed and the former exhibits it in an extremely simple form, no traces of embroidery or jewellery appearing on it. A similar plain example exists at All Hallows, Barking, London, dated 1437. The second of the West Grinstead brasses commemorates Joyce, wife of Sir Hugh Halsham, and the head is very similar to the foregoing, but the cauls are richly wrought and the band at their edges is represented. Nearly

[9] Quicherat, "Costume en France," p. 259.

identical with the brass of Lady Joyce Halsham is one in memory of an unknown lady at Hellingly. These are almost *fac-similes* as regards the head-dresses of the two ladies, the only difference being that the bands of the cauls are richer in the Hellingly example. In each case the veil hangs down the back, but later on we find it shortened, as in the brass of Petronilla Bartlot, dated 1490, at Stopham, and on a brass at Herne, Kent, of 1470.[10] In both the horned appearance of the head-dress is conspicuous, though we have no striking example on a Sussex brass of the extravagance so often characteristic of this kind of attire, but the monumental effigy of Beatrice, Countess of Arundel, dated 1439, at Arundel, shows to what an excess this outrageous fashion was occasionally carried.[11] In France the custom was earlier developed than in England, and indeed we are said to have adopted it from the nation whose boast it is that as early as the thirteenth century it led the fashion in European dress.

One form which the horned head-dress assumed was called lunar, and this moon-shaped affair occurs on the brass of Lady Bardolff, 1447, at Heveringham, Notts.[12]

Young unmarried ladies and girls in the fifteenth century generally wore the hair hanging loosely down their backs, but confined at the forehead by a simple fillet or a chaplet, a custom continued, more or less, till the present day. Spenser alludes to it and says of Alma, one of his heroines, that

> Her yellow golden heare
> Was trimly woven, and in tresses wrought,
> No other tire she on her head did weare,
> But crowned with a garland of sweet rosiere.
>
> "Faerie Queene," Bk. III., canto IX.

[10] In the example at Herne the meshes of the cauls enclose alternately a sun and a rose, the badges of the House of York, and on the effigy of Joan, wife of Sir Edmund de Thorpe, about 1414, at Ashwell Thorpe, Norfolk, the badge of a falcon appears on the lady's head-dress, interesting instances of the manner in which heraldic figures were introduced in costume.

[11] To suit the horned and other large head-dresses, the crowns and coronets of queens and noble ladies were correspondingly enlarged, as we see in this effigy and in a miniature forming the frontispiece to Lacroix's "Mœurs, Usages, &c."

[12] It may be here noted that the fashions in ladies' head-dresses frequently overlapped each other, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, so that old and new styles are often observed on different effigies of the same date.

A good example, dated 1452, is seen on the brass of Elizabeth Echingham, at Echingham; also in the head-dress of Agnes Oxenbridge, who died in 1480, and is commemorated by the same memorial. But unmarried ladies are not always shown with flowing locks and chaplets, as the brass of Katharine Stocket, about 1420 in date, at Lingfield, Surrey, has the head of her demi-figure covered by a simple veil only. This lady, we know, was a damsel or lady-in-waiting on Lady Cobham, of Sterborough, in Lingfield, and died unwedded.[13] On the other hand married women sometimes are portrayed wearing their tresses loose and flowing, as in the fourteenth century effigy of Queen Eleanor, wife of Edward I., in Westminster Abbey, and examples on brasses occur at Brabourn, Kent; Muggington, Derbyshire; and Turweston, Bucks. Children are often shown as wearing a kind of flat cap, as at South Mimms, Middlesex, 1440, and Leigh, Surrey, *circa* 1480.[14]

Of the butterfly head-dress, prevalent at the end of the fifteenth century, I am unaware of any examples in Sussex, but there is a notable one at Carshalton, Surrey, *circa* 1490, and another, 1480, at Wormley, Herts. In this coiffure the hair was strained back and confined in a richly ornamented caul at the back of the head, and to it were attached wires over which were wings of fine gauze. The tension of the hair caused by this head attire was so great, says Quicherat, writing of the fashion in France, "that many writers of the time were grieved at the suffering which dames thus dressed experienced."[15] This style of coiffure was much affected by ladies of rank, and is seen in a portrait of Anne, Queen of Richard III., decorating the "Warwick Roll." But whilst this extravagant custom was in vogue, ladies of less exalted rank were content with a much simpler form of head-

[13] This brass is engraved in "Surrey Archæological Collections," Vol. II., p. 129, where a notice of Katherine Stoket will be found.

[14] Groups of children are often seen wearing the same dress as that of the parents under whose feet they are placed, but at Birchington, Kent, the daughter of Alice Cryspe is seen with the pedimental frontlet of her mother and the flowing tresses of girlhood.

[15] Quicherat, "Costume en France," p. 286.

dress, as may be seen on the brass of Elizabeth Bartlet, at Billingshurst, 1499, where only a simple veil is shown, reaching just below the shoulders.[16]

BILLINGSHURST, 1499.

As at the present day men's tall hats have been termed "chimney pots," so in the fifteenth century a certain woman's head-covering was called a chimney, or steeple head-dress, but of this I am unaware of any Sussex example. It was of French origin and has been attributed to Isabel of Bavaria, wife of Charles VI., and is seen in many illuminated MSS. Like the butterfly head-dress, it had a veil attached to it which frequently reached the ground and sometimes concealed the forehead; it was generally white, whilst the steeple-shaped caul was of different colours. A good example is the portrait of Charlotte of Savoy, second wife of

[16] Hoods were frequently worn and were black in colour. Margaret Paston, *circa* Nov. 5th, 1452, writing to her husband, requests him to "bye a zerd (yard) of brode clothe of blac for an hood for me of xliiii^{d} or iiii^{s} a zerd" ("Paston Letters," Vol. I., p. 83). These black hoods were sometimes edged with gold cord, and, worn with brightly coloured dresses, they must have presented a by no means unpleasing contrast.

Louis XI. of France, engraved in Seré's "Moyen Age," Pl. XVI.[17]

About 1490 the pyramidal, or kennel head-dress was introduced, and an example is seen on a brass, dated 1496, at Dartford, Kent. In the succeeding century we have numerous instances on Sussex brasses. There is one of *circa* 1500 at Ardingly, and another on a small brass at Horsham, probably a few years later. The former is in memory of Elizabeth Wakehurst, who died in 1464, but the execution of the effigy is more recent. In it we clearly see the transition from the butterfly to the pyramidal form of head-covering, and in the Horsham example the hair appears still drawn back off the forehead. Both show perfectly plain frontlets, a feature which afterwards became much enriched. As the pyramidal form became perfected the gauze veiling disappeared, and the back of the head was enclosed in a bag or bonnet, generally of black and made of velvet, whilst the frontlet was richly embroidered in gold thread or otherwise.[18] Probably the portrait of Queen Elizabeth, wife of Henry VII., and engraved in Lodge's "Portraits," presents us with the richest example on record of the pyramidal head-dress. Here the hair is seen parted in the middle, and over it is a pointed hood with a narrow frontlet of jewel work, behind which is a much broader band edged with pearls and elaborately embroidered. The way in which this form of head-gear

[17] The extravagant head-dresses of the fifteenth century provoked much hostility on the part of the clergy and moralists. The horned head-dress especially was hateful and was looked upon as the particular characteristic of the costume of a disreputable woman. Mrs. Jameson, in her "History of Our Lord," Vol. I., p. 392, gives an engraving from a *Speculum Salvationis*, illustrating the Parable of the Ten Virgins, and where the five foolish ones are seen going down into hell conspicuous by their lofty head-dresses. Again, at Ludlow Church, Shropshire, is a miserere seat, showing a wicked ale-wife carried to the same place by a demon. She has already experienced one of the trials of hell—"defaut of clothing"—being entirely nude with the exception of her splendidly adorned head-gear, whilst her ale measure is retained in her hand. Another miserere in the same church exhibits a hideous old hag in one of these preposterous coiffures. The steeple head-dress also came in for its share of opprobrium, and Wright tells us that it "greatly provoked the indignation of the clergy, and zealous preachers attacked them roughly in their sermons" ("History of Caricature, &c.," p. 103).

[18] "The sumptuary law of 17 Edward IV. permits the wives and daughters of persons having possessions of the yearly value of £10 to use and wear frontlets of black velvet, or any other cloth of silk of the colour of black" (Fairholt, "Costume in England," Vol. II., p. 172).

was worn by a widow may be seen in a portrait of Margaret of Lancaster, mother of Henry VII., and forming Plate III. of the above-named work (Vol. I.).

ELIZABETH CULPEPER.
ARDINGLY, 1510

ELIZABETH SHELLEY
CLAPHAM, 1526

The brass of Elizabeth Culpeper, 1510, at Ardingly, shows us the lappets or frontlet enriched by a chevron pattern and separated from the head to the shoulders from the rest of the head-dress and the bonnet at the back.[19] The figures of Beatrice Apsley, 1515, at Thakeham, and of a lady at Crawley, about 1520, exhibit the loose-hanging lappets, and a very similar example is furnished by the head-dress of Elizabeth Shelley, at Clapham, dated 1526. In the brass of Margaret Challoner, at Rusper, 1532, we see the cap under the pyramidal head, and in which the hair was concealed. Dated 1533 is the brass of Denys Bradbryge, at Slinfold, and presents us with a plain example. Friston Church contains the figure of Margery Selwyn, dated 1542, and in the head-dress we perceive the first approach

[19] At Warlingham, Suffolk, a brass, *circa* 1510, shows a frontlet with the ends fringed. These pyramidal head-dresses are occasionally mentioned in wills, as in that of Isabel Fleming, proved 1544, who by it leaves to her daughter, Anne, her "best bonnett of velvet and a blacke frontlett of velvet," and to "ffraunces Merlonde" her "oulde velvett bonnett withe the ffrontlett to hit" ("Surrey Archæological Collections," Vol. VII., pp. 249-253.

to the Mary Stuart form, the lappets being shortened and bent inwards at the cheeks, but the old fashion is seen on the figure of one of the wives of Richard Covert, dated 1547, at Slaugham.

BEATRICE APSLEY.
THAKEHAM, 1515.

A LADY.
CRAWLEY, cā. 1520.

ELIZABETH COVERT.
SLAUGHAM, 1547.

JOANNA SHELLEY.
WARMINGHURST, 1553.

JOANNA SHURLEY.
ISFIELD, 1558.

When the Paris head or Mary Stuart fashion of cap was first introduced, the peaked or pyramidal form was retained, as is seen in a portrait, by Holbein, of Anne Bullen, dated 1536, and in another, by the same artist, of Jane Seymour, 1537. A near approach to the Stuart cap occurs on the brass of Johanna Shelley, 1553, at Warminghurst, and where the centre of the frontlet is depressed, the figure of a daughter behind her, shows the veil hanging down to the shoulders, though the effigy of Mary Shelley, 1550, at Clapham, has only a very short one, hardly reaching her neck.[20] Dame Fettyplace, at Slaugham, on her brass of 1586, has the centre of her cap coming down in a sharp peak at the forehead. At West Firle are several brasses for members of the Gage family and ancestors of the Viscounts Gage. One of these memorials has the portrait of Elizabeth Gage, and

MARGARET GAGE.
WEST FIRLE, 1595.

[20] A singularly plain head-dress appears in the portrait of Queen Katherine Parr (ob. 1548) and another of the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey (ob. 1554) is also conspicuous for the simplicity of the head attire. (See "Lodge's Portraits," Vol. I., Pl. 17 and 24.) The brass of Lady Elizabeth Goring, at Burton, dated 1558, shows the hair fully, and a cap with a kind of knotted circlet or chaplet on it. (See engraving in "S.A.C.," Vol. XXXVI., p. 178.)

bears date 1569, but the execution is probably contemporaneous with the brass of Margaret Gage, of 1595, at the same place. They are almost identical, as in each we see the hair rolled back from the face and the cap ornamented with a row of frilling round it, and still retaining the veil at the back. At Battle is the figure of Elizabeth Alfrey, bearing date 1599, and this is, I believe, the oldest Sussex brass of a lady in a hat. It is of peculiar shape, and perhaps the effigy may have been mutilated when it was recently re-laid in a fresh slab. Hats were worn over the French hood or cap, and there are many examples on brasses. They were often of beaver, and similar ones form to this day the holiday head-dresses of the almswomen of the Hospital at Castle Rising, Norfolk; and hats are still worn by the Welsh peasant women.[21] The brass of Anne Bartelot, 1601, at Slaugham, has the head of the figure simply wound about with drapery, whilst the portrait of Elizabeth, "uxor dilectissima" of Edward Culpeper, at Ardingly, shows the hair unconfined by any cap and in curls, over it being only a veil which hangs down the back nearly

MARY AND ROESIA BARTTELOT.
STOPHAM. 1614.

[21] In 1653 an ordinance at Yarmouth was annulled that only the alderman's wives should wear velvet hats. (See Blomefield's "History of Norfolk," Vol. XI., p. 397.)

to the feet. An engraving of this brass will be found in Haines, who remarks that the figure of Jane Cradock, 1626, at Ightham, Kent, was "evidently engraved by the same artist," and he considers this example at Ardingly "a good specimen of the female attire in the reign of Charles the First."[22] At Stopham are the brasses of Mary and Roesia Barttelot, wives of Richard Barttelot, and dated 1614. The figure of the former presents us with a lady advanced in years, with a vandyked edging to the cap under the veil; the image of the latter is clearly that of a younger woman and the head-gear of a lighter character. The brass of little Elizabeth Culpeper, aged seven, at Ardingly, 1634, and figures of children on the brass of Richard Barttelot, 1614, show the juvenile head-dresses of the period.[23]

ANN KENWELLMERSH.

HENFIELD. 1633.

[22] See Haines' "Manual of Monumental Brasses," Vol. I., p. ccxlviii.

[23] The brass of Elizabeth Culpeper is engraved in "S.A.C.," Vol. XXXVIII., p. 120. At Stopham we have a very remarkable series of brasses commemorative of members of the Barttelot or Bartlet family, consisting of effigies or inscriptions dating from 1460 to 1710. This in itself is noteworthy, but still more curious is the fact that in the seventeenth century the earlier memorials underwent a restoration, and the figures much altered, so that many of those older than 1600 cannot be considered trustworthy examples of costume.

Dated 1633 is the brass at Henfield of Mrs. Ann Kenwellmersh, "a vertovs and woorthy matron," and here we have an example of the monstrous hood then worn, which had a peak over the forehead, and the veil over it descended nearly to the ground.

The last example ends this series of illustrations of the head-dresses worn for the space of three and a half centuries by the fair sex in England during the lives of its members on earth; but there is still another head-dress to be recorded, and it is seen worn by Dame Mary Howard on her brass, dated 1638, at West Firle. It is one formed of the simplest materials either of flax or wool. The form varies but little, and the ornamentation, if any, is but trifling, and no costly embroidery or jewel work is expended upon it; moreover, it is worn by old and young, by rich and poor, by high and low, and by both sexes—for it is the shroud.

THE LAST HEAD-DRESS.

MARY HOWARD.
WEST FIRLE. 1638.